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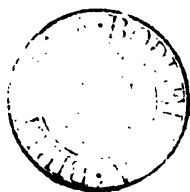
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ST. JAMES'S MAGAZINE.

THE
ST. JAMES'S MAGAZINE

DECEMBER TO MARCH.

VOL. XXI.



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PREFACE.

IN 1861 the ST. JAMES'S MAGAZINE was launched under the distinguished Editorship of Mrs. S. C. HALL, and subsequently, and for several years, was sustained by some of Miss BRADDON'S best novels. The Magazine is henceforth to be carried on to further literary fame and fortune by Mrs. J. H. RIDDELL, the well-known author of "George Geith of Fen Court;" and this lady has drawn around her, for assistance in the task she has undertaken, some well-esteemed lights of the literary world, in order that the New Series of the Magazine may be adorned with contributions of the highest order of merit.

When we say that the ST. JAMES'S MAGAZINE has employed the pens and editorial labours of two of the best lady novelists, and that the labours of a third will from this time further enhance its reputation, we think we boast of more than any other shilling Magazine can do. As for ourselves, little need be said: although we have had a connection with the Magazine from its first launch, latterly we have but kept the ball in motion until abler hands could be found to give it a fresh impetus.

That our successor may commence her reign untrammelled by any engagements of ours, and that a large number of Subscribers to a New Series may not be troubled with the end of a story, the present Editor trusts will be a palpable and sufficient excuse for the peculiar "make-up" of this issue of the ST. JAMES'S, and for its containing the amount of one number and a half at an extra cost.

In bringing our humble labours in connexion with the ST. JAMES'S MAGAZINE to a close, we avail ourselves of the opportunity to tender our grateful thanks, first, to our readers, for the steady and uniform support the Magazine has experienced while without the aid of great names; and, secondly, to our old contributors, for the prompt and willing aid they have at all times rendered us; and we are sure that, though our successor may attract more "stars" around her, she cannot find truer friends. We wish Mrs. RIDDELL the success her merits as a novelist deserve, and confidently trust that the new attractions promised in her Magazine will be rewarded by a large accession of subscribers.

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WAVERNEY COURT

CHAPTER XI.

THE RECTOR AND HIS DAUGHTER.

It was one evening about a month or six weeks after the exciting events which had so completely disturbed the equanimity of Waverney, that the Rev. Andrew Evelyn was pacing his snug little parlour with impatient strides. His face wore a somewhat stern and anxious expression, which was unusual to it. His spouse was sitting on a chair by the window, industriously knitting, and totally taken up with her work.

"My dear!" said the Rector, coming to a sudden halt, and turning full upon his wife with an unexpectedness which caused that lady to start with alarm, and her knitting-pins to fly out of her hands with a spasmodic action, as though she had been suddenly brought into contact with an electrifying-machine.

"Good gracious me, Andrew! how you did make me jump!" she ejaculated, mildly, as she stooped to recover her knitting-pins. "I was just thinking that when I have finished these curtains——"

"Never mind the curtains, my dear, just now. I was about to speak of Sir Walter. Do you know, my dear, I think that young man comes here rather too often."

His comely helpmate let fall her hands upon her lap, and glanced up in mute amaze.

"La, Andrew! why?" she said, with simplicity.

"Because we have a daughter!" the Rector replied.

Mrs. Evelyn didn't see it, even yet. She admitted frankly that they had a daughter, beyond all question, and that Grace was a good girl, though she didn't particularly take to plain needle-

work as she ought to; and that—in short, her husband interrupted her with an impatient “Pish!”

“Don’t you see, my dear,” he returned, speaking very slowly, and with forbearance, as though he were teaching a stupid child the multiplication-table. “Don’t you see that the young man is paying Grace a great deal of attention—too much attention, in fact. We shall have it said of us that we are angling after him, my dear, and that we are inveigling him into a match with our girl. Indeed, from one or two remarks which fell from Mrs. Barber when I met her this morning, I fancy some such lying scandal is afloat already. I should not like you and me to be called fortune-hunters, my dear.”

“If Sir Walter really does like Grace, I can’t see, for my part, why he shouldn’t say so,” began good Mrs. Evelyn, with precision, and not without something of gratification at the thought of having a baronet for her son-in-law. “And as for fortune-hunters——”

She was interrupted by an angry remark from the Rector, who seemed in no good humour, and she, being by no means strong-minded, thereupon indulged in a shower of tears. Mr. Evelyn could never be stern when his wife was in tears—a fact which, I fear, she had occasionally abused. He was about to speak some words of kindness, when the door opened, and Grace came tripping into the room. Her pretty face was all smiles, and in her hand she held a nosegay, with which she appeared not a little delighted.

“Is it not lovely?” she cried, thrusting her treasure under the smiling parson’s nose.

“Very lovely indeed, my dear, and so are you,” said he, smelling the flowers, and kissing the cheek of her who held them. “But I am afraid you have been playing sad havoc with my garden;” he added a paternal apprehension of the danger to which his horticultural children had been subjected: “I hope you have been careful what you have been picking?”

Grace smiled, and patted her father’s cheek.

“I have not been picking any,” she replied, “so you need not disturb your dear old noddle on that account.”

“Not picking them? Where, then, did they come from?”

“I don’t know, sir, where they *came* from, as I was not so rude as to be inquisitive on that point, especially as Sir Walter Lee was good enough to give them me.”

“Oh, indeed! Sir Walter Lee gave them to you, did he? Upon my word, it was a pretty present of Sir Walter, truly!”

Grace looked up into her father’s face with an expression of puzzled wonder, for he had begun to pace the room in a state of

great excitement. From him she glanced inquiringly at her mother, who had by this time partly recovered from weeping, and nearly ceased sniffing, and was alternately wiping her eyes upon her cambric and re-curling round her finger, a ringlet which had a tendency to become limp and refractory.

"Tell me, Grace," the Rector said, presently, "has Sir Walter Lee ever said anything to you? I mean, has he—has he——"

A sudden relapse into tears on the part of Mrs. Evelyn caused the agitated clergyman to stop. He hardly knew, indeed, how to express himself about the delicate matter he had upon his hands. Grace did not quite understand what was in the wind, but the tell-tale crimson upon her cheek, and the half-angry, half-defiant flash that gleamed from her eye, showed that she had, at least, an inkling as to what was coming next.

"Really, good people," she exclaimed, petulantly, turning from one to the other, "this is very mysterious and perplexing. Am I asking too much when I say I should like to know what it all means?"

"Listen to me, my dear child," said Mr. Evelyn, taking the girl's hand kindly. "It is a difficult thing for me to speak what I have to say to you, Grace; but still a few timely words of warning may save us much pain by-and-bye."

"Go on, sir—I am listening!" said Grace, a little haughtily.

"You know, Grace, Sir Walter has been a very frequent visitor of late—perhaps a too frequent visitor——"

"He comes here at your invitation, I believe, does he not?"

"Yes, Andrew, *that* you must confess!" interposed Mrs. Evelyn, drying her eyes, and turning upon her spouse with most alarming suddenness. "I heard you ask Sir Walter to come round and see us whenever he pleased, with my own ears. I was downstairs—no; let me see, I think I was upstairs——"

"Never mind all that, my dear," rejoined the Rector, anxious to avoid the recapitulation of his wife's reminiscences. "That is not the point. It is sufficient that he comes here. Do you know what people will think and say he comes for?"

Grace, of course, could not possibly think.

"They will say—in fact, they will say he comes to see *you*."

Grace certainly thought there was nothing wonderful in it if they did; but she didn't say so. She was silent, with her eyes cast upon the ground.

"Now, you know, my child, Sir Walter Lee is a baronet, and a rich man; you are the daughter of a simple clergyman, and a poor man. It is scarcely probable he ever seriously thought of linking himself by marriage to such as we are."

Grace felt rather nettled at this, it must be confessed, as the tapping of her little foot upon the carpet very plainly showed.

"We will, however, even allow that Sir Walter really does, for the present, entertain such views; and though his attention to you, during the last few weeks, has been marked—but I was such a blind fool as not to observe it, until some remarks I heard to-day made me reflect—we must remember he has, as yet, given you no positive reason to think he does; but, even allowing this, I say, there may come a time when he will think better of it. And how then?"

"You talk to me as though *I* sought out Sir Walter, and asked him to marry me!"

"No, Grace, I do not; but this is what others will say. They will say that you—that *I*—that *all* of us sought him out for his wealth and his title. You would not like that the finger of scorn should be pointed at us as fortune-hunters, would you, my child? You would not like him ever to be able to say that Grace Evelyn was sticking up her cap at him?"

"Well, sir, what do you wish me to do?" said the girl, in a low voice, and her heart swelling. "Do you wish me to enter a convent, or anything of that kind, in order that I may escape the ignominious title of a baronet-hunter, and that we may be mercifully preserved from the shafts of scandal of the village matrons and old maids? Or perhaps it would be well I should tell Sir Walter that he mustn't come to the Rectory any more, in case he should fall into the vicious habit of courting me; and that, upon no consideration, must he ask me to marry him. 'Tis true that, as you justly observe, the gentleman has given us little reason to suppose he intends so honouring me; he might deem such an injunction on my part as rather unmaidenly, and might, perhaps, take it as something more than a delicate hint of my ambitious hopes. But, *n'importe, mon père*; I am in your hands; I will do what you think best."

"Why this bitter mockery, my child? I am not angry with you; God forbid!"

"I am glad of that, sir!" interposed the girl, with hauteur. "Permit me to say I know not why you should be."

"My child! my child!" returned the Rector, in a tone of deep feeling, "it is not merely against the scandal of village gossips that I would protect you; it is also against self-reproach and the bitterness of shame which you would suffer if your affections were trifled with. I do not wish to forbid the young man my house; he has always acted as a gentleman and a man of honour, in so far as I have had anything to do with him. But I warn you, my dear child, to set a watch upon your heart. Do not allow him ever the faintest opportunity to turn upon you, but rather be distant with him, though polite—reserved, though friendly. There is an old

proverb, Grace : 'To the eagle the eyrie ; to the dove the dove-cote.' Let none ever be able to say that the dove aspired to the eyrie."

"You shall not have reason to complain of me," the girl said, in a low voice. But she had not heard half of the latter speech. Her face was very pale, and, as she replied, she went up to her father and kissed him ; then she gathered up her dress around her, and left the room with a haughty tread. She had determined, when Sir Walter came, he should little know the feelings that then agitated, with the violence of a volcano, her breast. She hardly knew *what* she meant to do. Her pride was wounded deeply.

But what woman can do battle with her fate ?

CHAPTER XII.

A MYSTERIOUS CONFESSION.

THE calm, bright days of August had now come on. Upon the evening following that recorded in the last chapter, Miss Grace Evelyn was sitting alone in that little *sanctum sanctorum* of hers—her bed-chamber—and was looking out of that self-same little window out of which we have seen her looking so sentimentally once before already. For a few moments she was trimming the sweet-smelling flowers that grew in the neat green flower-pots upon the window-sill, humming the whilst some ditty in her own fresh voice, than which there was none more musical in all Waverney. Then she would suddenly leave off singing—by the bye, it was only a very sentimental sort of singing, you must know, dear reader, and if it showed anything at all, it only seemed to indicate that Miss Grace herself was very sentimental and melancholy that night, and by no means betokened that she was merry and light of heart—and then a half-frown would steal over her, and her lip would curl scornfully, making her look as queenly, perhaps, as Madam Dido may have looked when angry with Æneas. Then she would turn to her little old-fashioned oval looking-glass, which was so small that, when she looked into it, it seemed only like a frame to hold her head. After that the frown would change into one of the very prettiest smiles that ever drove a mortal man stark staring mad with its witchery. No doubt the young lady was pleased at what she beheld in that said oval looking-glass ; and beyond question, dear madam, if you could have had a sly peep over her shoulder, you would have been envious, and *you*, sir, would have very readily confessed that one might travel a long day's journey, and never see a prettier sight.

Now, it happened suddenly to come across the mind of Miss Grace that Farmer Smith's little boy (who, it may be remembered,

it was said on a former occasion to have been at that time afflicted with hooping-cough) was now direfully suffering from another complaint to which children are subject, and that she had promised to take over to the farm, for the little sufferer's behoof, a certain famous compound of Norway tar and small beer, which Mrs. Evelyn ever kept on hand for such emergencies, and which was esteemed by that lady a sovereign remedy for that complaint.

The evening was serene and calm. The pale moon, in the twilight, was shimmering over the corn-fields, and the declining sun had not yet got so far upon his journey to pay his midnight visit to New Zealand but that he had left the imprint of his retreating footsteps in the bright, red western sky, and had, moreover, caused the old church of Waverney to look sombre in the shadow of the trees which enshrouded it—all except its quaint diamond-paned windows and its trembling vane, which gleamed out in the azure, golden.

A nice walk across the fields to the farmer's on such an evening would certainly be pleasant enough. Farmer Smith's "modest mansion" did not lie very remote from Waverney Court, and it was just possible—nay, it was very probable, as Miss Grace knew—that Sir Walter Lee might be out that evening, walking. But even this did not deter that young lady from running the risk of meeting him—not at all. It wasn't likely she was going to be kept indoors all day on that account. If he should happen to fall across her by the way, why, it wasn't *her* fault, was it? And if he *did* fall across her, and speak to her, wouldn't she let him know that she wasn't "sticking up her cap" at *him*, forsooth? Not that she quite believed Sir Walter would ever say *that* of her. Indeed, the probability of such a thing (she had been mentally debating the question the whole of that morning and afternoon) had seemed so very remote, that the bare possibility of it had caused her cheeks to burn, and her blood to tingle. But, then, whether or no, a little severity on her part wouldn't do the young man any harm, at all events. Besides, had she not promised her father she would be distant and severe with him? So she would be keeping her promise, and teaching the conceited young baronet to be reverential, at the same time.

Going out for a walk in which you *might* meet a certain person is not like going out purposely to meet him, is it, now? Grace wouldn't have gone out to meet Sir Walter that evening, and after the little scene with her father the night before—no, not for all the golden guineas in the Indies and out of them. But the real question for her to determine was, not whether she should go out to meet Sir Walter, but whether she should go out to take the wondrous specific to poor little Master Smith. Certainly, it is the duty of every Christian to alleviate the sufferings of the sick. Grace was a Christian. So,

upon the whole, she thought she might as well go. Whereupon, having come to this conclusion, she took down from the peg upon which it was hanging—oh! ye loaves and little fishes!—the prettiest, the knowingest, and the most coquettish little bonnet (it was the fashion then, my fair friends, as you will no doubt remember, to wear little fly-away bonnets which almost looked like hoods—the days of the loftier spoon-shaped *chapeaux* were just about to commence) that ever made the face of pretty maiden look the prettier—the most charming bonnet—in fact (it didn't look the slightest as though Grace was in mourning for anybody), with a coquettish mite of a black bow peeping out here, and another there, and a white rose hiding its modest head somewhere else; in short, it was so light and graceful, that you might almost have mistaken it for a tissue-paper fly-cage; and you would then only have just to fancy that the envious and admiring glances of every male beholder were the flies, and the simile would be complete. Well, having taken this marvellous bonnet in her hands, of course the next thing was to put it quickly on before the glass, bobbing her head almost into the mirror at first, and then drawing it back a little way to admire the effect, and to see how it looked further off, and so forth. After which, the next thing to be done, as you, my dear readers, are aware, was to tie those said bonny broad ribbons into a suitable bow.

"I don't believe he ever said, or ever will say, or ever *would* say, anything of the kind!" exclaimed Grace, vehemently, as one of the said strings was satisfactorily looped, and brought into its proper place.

"I *won't* believe it!" she added, as she finally adjusted the other.

And this, dear reader, was doubtless a very satisfactory way of settling the question which had been disturbing her mind, and I dare say she felt all the easier after it.

Now having donned a trim little lace mantle, that looked as knowing and coquettish almost as the bonnet itself; and having encased her dainty little hands in the tightest-fitting pair of kid gloves that ever were seen at Waverney; and having provided herself with the very neatest parasol that ever tempted the eye of lady, shopping in Regent-street; and having, moreover, received an adequate supply of Norway tar and small beer, with minute instructions from her mamma as to the manner in which the ailing Master Smith was to take it, away she went, tripping along the road, sometimes diverging off into the open fields, and making withal the hearts of all womankind turn almost into acid-drops with the sourness of their envy, and striking all men speechless and motionless with admiration.

The evening was indeed delightful for walking. The sky was calm and tranquil, and save in the west, where the golden clouds of sunset yet tinged the celestial canopy, was of the purest azure hue. A few stars were already peeping out. The song of the lark still fell upon the ear, and mingled harmoniously with the deep cawing of the rooks, which, seeking their abode, speckled the sky in their flight. The scenery was as lovely as the evening. Far off as the eye could reach were the purple Kentish hills; cornfields, studded with nodding poppies; green hop-grounds here and there; pastures, in which cattle and sheep were grazing, were scattered near and far.

Listen! Was that the barking of a dog? Sir Walter Lee very often had a dog—a fine Newfoundland he was, too—to accompany him in his rambles. Bless us and save us! how the fluttering heart of Miss Evelyn did beat behind the bodice which imprisoned it! And yet Grace was no more afraid of dogs, as a general rule, than she was of baa-lambs. A dog it certainly proved to be, but not the fine bounding Newfoundland which she more than half expected. It was only a vulgar shepherd's dog, with a dirty coat, and no more like the other than the ragged yokel, in smock-frock bedecked, before whom he was prancing, was like unto Sir Walter Lee. Grace thought she had never seen an uglier dog nor an uglier man in all the days she had lived at Waverney.

But just as the young lady neared a certain style, at which she had, by mere chance, on one or two occasions, encountered the young proprietor of Waverney Court before, whom should she see, leaning against an ancient elm-tree, but Sir Walter Lee himself.

If her heart had beaten quickly before, it went like a veritable steam-hammer now. If she had blushed when she had beheld in the looking-glass how charmingly that little bonnet became her, *now* her face was suffused with the glowing hue of the rose. To speak the simple truth, our young lady was not very much astounded at beholding Sir Walter reclining against that tree. And yet so great was her flurry, that she could scarcely for the moment determine what she would do. She had half a mind to pretend not to see him at all, but to pass him by unnoticed, as though he were merely a portion of the tree against which he was standing. Wouldn't he feel mortified if she served him so? But then, on the other hand, she couldn't pass him by as though she had not seen him at all, and this was simply because she *had* seen him, and because his deep melancholy eye had *seen* that she saw him, just as she let her own fall in confusion to the ground. Another very cogent reason why she could not have served him such a trick was, that Sir Walter Lee would not have let her, since, as she approached, he sprang forward into the pathway, and stood before her. The first thing that Grace noticed was that his face was very pale.

"I half expected, at least I hoped to see you this evening, Miss Evelyn," he said.

"Indeed, Sir Walter," said Grace, coolly, and elevating her eyebrows.

"As the weather was so fine, I thought very likely you would avail yourself of it for a walk."

He appeared very embarrassed and confused. He did not raise his eyes to Grace's face, but seemed to be wholly occupied with beating the heel of his boot with the riding-whip which he held in his hand.

"I have not come out for a walk merely, I have business up at the farm." Saying which the young lady nodded Sir Walter a dismissal, and prepared quietly to move on.

"Stay one moment, Miss Evelyn; I wish to speak to you. Ah! are you in a hurry?"

"I am rather," returned Grace.

"Then permit me to accompany you on your way to the farm."

"I will not take you out of your way, Sir Walter. I will listen here to what you have to say."

And Grace turned resolutely and haughtily upon him.

"I am going to leave England, Miss Evelyn."

"To leave England?" repeated Grace, with the very slightest perceptible tremulousness.

"Yes, Grace, I have come to that resolution. It would have been best for me not to have sought this interview, but I could not bring myself to leave Waverney without saying good-bye."

"Are you—are you going far?" demanded the girl, faltering.

"I hardly know where I am going, yet," he returned, almost with a groan.

Poor Grace had turned as pale in the face almost as the young baronet himself. And as she pulled her mantle closely around her, a slight quiver shook her frame. Nevertheless, whatever her emotion, she concealed it pretty well—certainly much better than the young man concealed his. You see girls are educated to seem impassive, and to hide their inward impulses; boys are not subjected by their destiny to conceal their feelings so completely behind a mask. All Grace's strong resolutions had departed now. She entertained no longer the visions of calm disdain with which she was going to treat him. She felt stricken with a deep stab, she felt also that she must disguise the wound, that she must talk calmly, as though she were calm; appear indifferent, as though she were indifferent indeed.

I am afraid there may be some of my readers who may censure Grace Evelyn for being too forward and unmaidenly in suffering herself to feel such an interest in a young man who was above her

in station, and who, moreover, had, after all, said but little to lead her to think he was enamoured of her. To such, I have only to observe, there are many ways by which a man makes love, besides a formal declaration in so many uttered words. Of such innumerable methods of making love, Sir Walter Lee had not been guiltless. There ensued a brief silence, which Grace was the first to break. It was a terrible struggle for her to assume an unmoved countenance, but she succeeded to a certain extent.

"I hope you will enjoy your trip, I'm sure," she said, looking steadily into his face. If she had felt any anger against him, it had changed into compassion now, when she saw the violence of the emotion which agitated him.

Lee shook his head, with a sad woe-begone expression upon his face. "There is little enjoyment ever again for me, Miss Evelyn," he returned.

"Are you not going for pleasure, then?" demanded Grace.

She was very anxious to know something about this journey. Why didn't the young fellow speak out? Why was he so reticent? How melancholy he looked! It was impossible that *he* could ever think she was hunting him up; much less that he could ever say so. She would not believe a word of it any more.

"For pleasure?" he repeated with a loud and bitter laugh, that quite startled her. "I will tell you why I go," he added, in a fierce whisper, as he cast away the end of the cigar he had been smoking. "I go, Grace, because I can remain here no longer."

"Sir Walter Lee!" ejaculated the girl, terrified by his vehemence.

"Yes, by heaven I speak the truth! Oh, Grace—Grace Evelyn, a dreadful destiny is mine. Would to God I had never seen you, for having seen you, I have learned to love you; till my last day I shall never forget you! You will dwell in my memory like a beautiful vision that might have been realised, but which for me must pass away for ever. I love you, Grace, with all my heart, with all my soul, not with passion which dishonours, but with a pure tenderness, such as elevates even such a wretch as I; and yet I cannot, I *dare* not ask you to return that love, and to become my wife. Great heaven, what have I been saying? Oh, Grace, forgive me, have pity on me! I meant not to have spoken to you thus; it was for fear I should do so that I sought to flee from you. Forget what I have said, I implore you. I am indeed a most miserable man!" And he buried his face in his hands, and sobbed aloud.

The girl was scarcely less agitated than he. She sympathised with him in his great agony, yet her sympathy was mingled with anger and injured pride; perhaps, also, with a little scorn. She thought that he meant the difference of their position in life

separated them. When he said that he *dare* not marry her, she thought he meant that his rank as a baronet and a wealthy man debarred him from espousing a poor clergyman's daughter, such as she was ; that he feared perhaps, if he did so, his wife might not be treated as his equal in the sphere to which he belonged, and that this was why he *dare* not ask her to marry him. You perceive that Miss Evelyn very much magnified a baronet's importance, and very much depreciated her own. But she was a simple country maiden, who thought in her modesty that she was nothing in the world, whereas was not *he* the great magnate who reigned supreme at Waverney Court ?

"It is much better as it is, Sir Walter," she said to him presently.

"Better?" retorted the other, hoarsely. "How so, in the name of patience?"

"The difference in our rank, Sir Walter Lee, would make a marriage between us undesirable, were it for no other reason," returned the girl, somewhat haughtily. She was unable to get over that little distinction quite.

The young soldier looked up at her with a vague stare. He did not appear to comprehend the meaning of what she said.

"The difference of our rank?" he repeated, with a stare of astonishment.

"Yes, Sir Walter; I am not unmindful that—that you occupy a position to which I, as a poor clergyman's daughter, should not——"

"Perish my rank!" retorted the other, again giving way to his wild passion. "Had I been a vulgar hind, earning my bread at the plough's tail, I should not have been the loathesome and miserable creature I am!"

"Loathesome?" exclaimed Grace, recoiling from him with horror.

"Aye, loathesome! for such, in the sight of heaven, I am."

"Why, Sir Walter Lee, you frighten me; what do you mean?"

"No matter, Grace Evelyn; I cannot explain. Do not in mercy ask me for any explanation."

"I did not mean to ask you any question that pained you," murmured Grace, in confusion.

"No, no, I know you did not. But—but this is one which I cannot answer you, because—because I want you to think as well of me as you can. I did not mean to have spoken as I have; but the words came out, and I had no control over them. I came merely to tell you that I was going away—for—for at least, some time, and to bid you farewell before I started."

After this they walked on a few steps further in silence. The

sun had now entirely disappeared. The moon was high, and shining brightly and calmly upon the tranquil scene. To the left lay Waverney Court, looming vaguely in the distance, amidst the thick growth of trees and copsewood which surrounded it, while close before them was the farm, out of the tessellated window of which a faint ray of light was gleaming. Perfect silence reigned around, except that it was broken now and then by the see-saw song to which the honest farmer, in the enjoyment of rest after the day's toil, gave utterance, as he sat at his door smoking his evening pipe, and playing with his children, of whom there was *one* who would probably have been less joyous had he known what Miss Evelyn had in store for him close at hand.

"We must now separate, I think," said Grace, quietly, as she gave the other her hand, which he seized and pressed passionately between his own.

"Good-bye, Grace, dear!" he murmured, excitedly; "it is for the good of both of us we should part; had I known that I should have come to love you as I do, I would never have returned to Waverney. Good night, good night!"

With a last passionate pressure of the hand, he turned away, leaving Grace Evelyn almost stupefied, and gazing after him till his tall shadow had disappeared amidst the thick foliage of the park tress; then, heaving a sigh, she turned towards the farm, at which in a minute or two more she arrived.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GAMEKEEPER.

WHILE Grace was hastening with a fluttering heart towards the farm, on the errand which was no doubt subsequently the cause of much anguish of mind and many wry faces to Master Smith, Sir Walter Lee was speeding in the opposite direction, never turning for a moment to glance behind, at a speed which, in some measure, betokened the mental agitation with which he was convulsed.

"Thank heaven!" he exclaimed at length, stopping in his wild career to wipe the perspiration from his brow. "Thank heaven that this is over so far, and that I have had the resolution to bring myself to do it. How beautiful she is!—how pure and noble! Oh, it is indeed well I have broken *this* chain which binds me! Would that I could break the *other*, which drags me down to misery! Dishonoured wretch that I am, if I had suffered a fearful destiny to link this poor girl to me, how much greater would have been my infamy! And yet I know not, if I had not pursued

this one bold step I have, whether I might not, blinded by my passion, have done a deed even so foul as this!

The young man was so taken up with his overwhelming emotion that he had not even regarded whence nor whither he had come. He had reached a waste and desolate spot of common land, which, however, occupying a gently-sloping eminence, commanded a full view of the surrounding parts. He halted a moment to look around him, and to ascertain where he was. He had not long to consider, for the place was perfectly familiar to him. At his back was an old windmill, standing out gloomily in the moonlight, and cresting the hill. At his feet a deep valley, studded with scattered farms and cottages, which were distinguished in the semi-obscurity by the faint lights which gleamed from the windows. At half a mile distant, and at the very extremity of the broad expanse, was Waverney Church, its slim spire just visible in the silvery moon-rays. A little to the left, and enveloped in its well-wooded park, was Waverney Court.

"How happy might some men be in the possession of such a place as this!" he muttered, as his eye fell upon his own noble mansion. "And I—and I have *that* which would render me miserable were Waverney Court a kingdom!"

He was then—filled with the excitement which flushed his face, leaving a hectic spot on each pale cheek—about to resume his course towards Waverney Court, when a sudden idea appearing to strike him, he clapped his hand upon his brow. "I will see that fellow, Shaw, this night!" he exclaimed, as though he were unconscious he was giving verbal utterance to his thoughts. "That rascal is the only man who need cause me any worry. It will not do to have him babbling about. He must leave Waverney—by heaven he *shall*! I cannot—I will not leave him here behind me!"

The speaker had now turned off into the direction which left Waverney Court somewhat on his left hand, but which, nevertheless, bore still into the neighbourhood of the park. "I am rich," he muttered, scoffingly; "that at least is an advantage which I did not possess a little while ago. I will *buy* him. If ever a man was to be bought with money, he is that rascally knave, Tom Shaw. I wonder if the fellow is at home?—I suppose so, as there is a light in his window."

He approached a little cottage, or lodge, on the outskirts of the park, in which resided Tom Shaw, the gamekeeper, who, as will be remembered, gave some evidence at the coroner's inquest upon the body of Sir William Lee.

"Holloa! who goes there?" cried a hoarse voice, which made the other start; and the tall figure of a man, who stood about six-

feet-one, but who, on account of his uncommon thinness looked even taller than that, emerged from behind a bush into the full light, holding a gun in his hand, and having a fierce bull-dog following closely at his heels. "Oh, beg your pardon, Sir Walter—didn't know it was you," said the new-comer, in a loud, disrespectful tone, and barely deigning to touch the wide-awake hat which he wore slouching over his brow.

"Ah, Shaw! I was just coming after you," returned the other, appearing with difficulty to repress his anger. "I want to have a few minutes talk with you."

"All right, Sir Walter," returned the man. Then whistling a call to his uncouth-looking dog, "P'raps you wouldn't mind coming into my crib, then, Sir Walter; or shall we have it out here?"

"Lead the way; I will follow you," was the brief reply.

"Werry well, Sir Walter, jest as yer like. Come along, Jenny, gal!" And closely followed by his canine companion, and more distantly by Sir Walter Lee, the unprepossessing gamekeeper led the way to his lodge.

"Take a seat, Sir Walter," said he, when they had entered the place. "P'raps, Sir Walter, yer wouldn't mind that there stool; it's rather a hard'un, but it's good enough for such as me. It's the only one I've got, though, Sir Walter, so you must please excuse."

The young soldier quietly seated himself upon the three-legged wooden stool, whilst the other, having stood his gun in the corner of the little room, proceeded to snuff the solitary candle which was guttering down upon the table, and then to throw one leg over a lofty bench, to cock his hat on one side, to lean his back against the wall, and then to intimate that he was in a convenient attitude to listen to what his master had to say. "Well, Sir Walter, what's in the wind now?" said he. "Anything up?"

"I suppose we are quite alone here—I mean, there is no one who can overhear our conversation?"

"Not a blessed soul, Sir Walter; leastways, except this young warmint, who I s'pose won't know much o' what we are talking about, though she has got darned sharp ears. *She* wouldn't let any one overhear us, I fancy, without letting us know a bit beforehand."

"It will, however, be as well to secure the door."

"Werry well, Sir Walter, jest as yer like, as I said afore, and say again." And the man went to the door, turned the key, shot the bolt into its socket, and then returned with imperturbable gravity to his place. "Now for it, then, Sir Walter," he said.

"I am going to leave England, Shaw." The gamekeeper opened his great eyes, and gave a long, low whistle.

"What's that for, Sir Walter?" he demanded, with evident surprise.

"Merely because I do not find it convenient to remain here," returned Lee, sharply.

"I didn't speak to go to pry, Sir Walter," said Shaw, half surlily, half apologetically.

"It is well; I would not, if I were you," retorted the baronet, with an angry flash of the eye.

"I didn't go to do it, Sir Walter; I didn't, upon my soul! But go on, Sir Walter; what then?"

"I want you to leave England also, Shaw."

"With you, Sir Walter?"

"No, no, not with me," replied the young soldier, turning aside to conceal his disgust. "With whom else you please, and where you please; but not with me. Will you go?"

The gamekeeper replied with a cunning leer, and rubbing his nose to give force to it. "Not if I know it, Sir Walter," he said.

"Not if you were paid well?"

"That might be an indocement, certainly. But I'm tolerably comfortable where I am, so I don't much care about it, you know, Sir Walter, unless the indocement, as I said afore, were pretty biggish."

"Listen to me, Shaw. If you will go abroad, and promise me faithfully not to return, I will give you a hundred pounds in Bank of England notes."

Shaw drew his bony hand across his mouth reflectively, as though he were mentally calculating his intrinsic worth, having apparently performed which operation, he shook his head. "A hundred cooters isn't much, Sir Walter," he returned, insinuatingly. "Yer see I'm in a comfortable sort of place here along o' you; and I'm thinking I know a thing or two, Sir Walter—beggin' yer pardon—that you'd sooner give more nor a hundred pound than I should blab about. Now, Sir Walter, if you'd make it—say *two* hundred, perhaps I might."

"Two hundred it shall be, then," the other eagerly rejoined.

The gamekeeper scratched his shaggy head with hesitation, and looked as though he were sorry he had not demanded a higher sum.

"Where do you propose going, and when?" demanded the baronet quickly.

"Oh, anywheres, as to that; I ain't partickler. Americay is as good as any other place for me, if that'll do for you?"

"America will do better than any other place. You'll enlist in the army, of course; and you'll be a credit to the northern cause. If you're not killed, Shaw, I shouldn't wonder if you became a general; there are some that you're moral status is almost equal to already; but you must take care of yourself, or you'll get killed."

"I hope not that, Sir Walter; because you'd be so sorry, wouldn't you?"

"Attend to my instructions," said Lee, rising from his stool and not heeding the last remark, which had been delivered with the speaker's usual cunning leer. "I understand that you accept my terms?—that is to say, two hundred pounds, on condition of your leaving here to-morrow morning, and of your proceeding direct to Liverpool, and embarking by the first packet for the United States. Do you agree?"

"Yes, Sir Walter, I do."

"Pack up your things, then, this night, and come round to the Court at nine o'clock to-morrow morning, and half of the amount I have promised you shall be ready for you. The remaining half shall be transmitted to you at New York, or where you please, as soon as you arrive at any port of America and send me satisfactory proof to that effect. You will, of course, in the meantime, observe a discreet silence as to what you are about to do. If you should see anyone about the place, you had best perhaps state that you are going to leave my service in order to better your position, or—in short, I will leave you to hatch up what story you think best. You are a greater liar, Shaw, and a more cunning rascal than most men, so I need not trouble you with any unnecessary instructions on that head. Do you understand all this?"

"Perfectly, Sir Walter," returned the man, grinning, and seeming to look upon this opinion of his moral qualities as rather complimentary than not.

"That, then, is all I have to say at present. I will now go. At nine o'clock I shall expect you; you will not fail? And—look you, Shaw, you understand that you are not to set foot in England again, or at least for years—for many years to come."

"In course not, Sir Walter; I wouldn't go to do such a thing; and after you've been and paid me, too, so liberal," rejoined the fellow, in an offended tone. "Come, Sir Walter, you do take on to a feller, you do, if you think so bad of him as that."

"I have not a very high opinion of you, Shaw, I must confess," the baronet replied, drily. "But I fancy I hold you in about as much esteem as you deserve. But never mind. Good night!"

"Good night, Sir Walter! Hulloo!"

"Well, what is it now?" demanded Lee, turning sharply round at the shout of the gamekeeper, which recalled him before he had proceeded three steps from the lodge.

"You don't mean to say, Sir Walter, you're a-going along o' *that* way to the Court at this time o'night?"

"Why not this way as well as any other? and why not at this time o'night?"

"Oh, hem ! If you don't mind, Sir Walter, I've no call to mind ; only *I* shouldn't care about walking at night along o' the place where Sir William was—was found."

"Psha ! Why, man, you are a positive fool !" ejaculated Lee, with a laugh of scorn. "Is it possible that a great hulking fellow like you either believes in ghosts, or is frightened at them ?"

"I don't know about that, Sir Walter," returned Tom Shaw, shaking his woolly head doubtfully, and scratching it lazily at the same time.

"I do not, at all events, Shaw, if you are such a fool."

And so saying, Sir Walter Lee turned upon his heel, and sped quickly towards his mansion, taking the same pathway he had pursued before. Shaw remained watching his retreating figure until it was completely lost in the gloom. He then turned confidentially to his dog.

"So Sir Walter says we're to go to Americay ; what do you think of that, Jenny ?" said he. "And we're not to come back again to England to disturb his reverence, nor more we are, Jenny. And we won't come back, will we, Jenny ? Oh, no, not afore the blunt runs short, and we want some more, Jenny ; and then we'll see, Jenny, and then we'll see !"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEW PARTHENON.

"DEUCED shame of the Academy to hang my 'Sleeping Venus' as they have. By Jove, they've poked it right up into the ceiling, and in the worst possible light."

"Never mind, my boy ; 'there's many a flower,' *et cetera*. Excuse my finishing the quotation. You may have heard it possibly ?"

"But no one can see it," persisted the aggrieved artist, petulently, in allusion, it is to be presumed, to his picture, and not to the quotation.

"So much the better for you, my boy," was the unflattering reply.

"What an ill-natured fellow you are, Rowley !"

"What a conceited fellow you are, Fitzhugh !"

And the speaker lazily withdrew his cigar from his mouth, shifted his right leg from one arm of his easy chair to replace his left leg upon the other, and languidly suffered the smoke to exhale in a spiral cloud from his lips. This luxurious individual was no other than Sir Henry Rowley, Bart., captain in the —th Life Guards, and the famous wit and man of fashion, whose great name

and reputation, it will be remembered, collapsed—alas, for the glory of earthly triumphs!—soon after the Derby Day of '63, and who is at the present writing travelling in Italy for—well, let us be charitable, and say for the benefit of his health.

His companion was the Honourable Septimus Fitzhugh, third son of Viscount Sandyboots and Baron de Clogue, and whose fine genius for painting—of which he was an enthusiastic amateur—might some day prove an ornament to his country—that is, if he lived long enough.

These two gentlemen were members of that famous club known as the New Parthenon, in Pall Mall, that celebrated structure which cost such a mint of money two or three years ago, in the constructing, of which there was so much talk at the time; which was to be such a magnificent edifice, but which proved, as all the world may see, such a hideous compound of architectural enormities, that even our friend the Honourable Septimus Fitzhugh, though no professing architect, had been heard to vow he himself could design a better. The handsome ormula timepiece, belonging to the club, indicated the hour to be half-past five. Our two great men were sitting at one of the windows staring at the carriages as they rolled by, and criticising the dress, beauty, morals, and worldly wealth of those who rode within them. Three dogs were fighting and howling in the street, where also the horses in the cab-rank were quietly regaling out of their nose-bags, whilst their drivers were likewise regaling out of pewter-pots. A sandy-whiskered policeman—a fresh importation from the country—was marvelling at the Guards' Memorial, as well he might. The early autumn wind was blowing the dust in clouds out from the park, and into the faces of the pedestrians trudging along the Mall.

The Honourable Septimus Fitzhugh threw his cigar end out of the window; the same was eagerly picked up by a small boy with a birch-broom outside. Sir Henry Rowley, Bart., stretched his elegant limbs, picked his teeth, stroked his exquisite moustache, and yawned.

"Dooood dull in town; isn't it?" observed the Honourable Septimus Fitzhugh, running his fingers through his glossy black hair, which was naturally straight, and which he suffered to grow long, so as to have the appearance of *negligé* which is affected by artists and men of genius generally.

"No one is in town," rejoined Sir Henry, lazily. "What do you stay in town for, old boy?—not that you're anybody, though, you understand that. We shouldn't miss you much—except when we want to go to sleep."

"By Jove, I can't help it, Rowley!" returned the other, who was too simple to perceive his friend's impertinence, and who was

too used to it to mind it much, even if he did. "The fact is, I'm regularly hard-up just now, or I'd be off to Rome—Rome, the celestial city—the natural home of genius!"

"I'm afraid the Honourable Septimus Fitzhugh wouldn't feel quite in his natural element there, then; would he?" interrupted the wit, with a polished sneer.

"Wouldn't I, by George!" rejoined the enthusiastic artist, making a rapid sketch of St. Peter's upon the club copy of the *Times*. "Gad, Rowley, I wish I knew how to raise a thousand or so just now!"

"Do you? I declare the noble son of the Viscount Sandyboots is almost as original in his wishes as he is in his pictures," the brilliant guardsman retorted.

"Pray reserve your chaff for some more worthy object, Rowley!"

"Pity you haven't got some good-natured relative who is weary of this sinful world, and who is willing to leave it, with his cares and wealth, to you, my boy; like the excellent uncle of our friend Lee. By the way, Fitzhugh, what has become of Lee? I haven't seen the fellow since his unexpected slice of good luck."

"Dooce take me if I know. Ask Dent; he knows, if anybody does. They used always to be cronies. But hang it, Rowley, do look at that charming girl in the barouche! Ye powers, what a divine face!—a perfect Venus!"

"Small flattery for the lady if she's anything like your Venus; but *n'importe, mon ami*, you meant it for a compliment, I dare say?"

A tall young fellow, with a dusky complexion, and a military moustache, and who had been reading the newspaper at the further window, crossed over to where the speakers were sitting.

"Well, gentlemen," said he, "what may be the important question you desire to ask the humble individual who rejoices in the name of Dent?"

"Oh, Dent, do you know anything about Lee?" demanded Fitzhugh. "Where is he? We haven't seen him here these two months."

"My dear fellow, I know no more about him than you do, and that is merely what everybody may read in the newspapers for themselves. His uncle has been murdered, and he has quietly walked into the title and estate, which, I believe, is at a place called Waverney, somewhere in Kent. Poor fellow! I'm very glad of it, for his sake. He has had a good bit of trouble."

"Trouble? How d'ye mean?" demanded Sir Henry Rowley, as he stretched his hands down to the very bottom of the pockets in his pegtops. Sir Henry's trouble had always been there.

Lieutenant Dent—he was in the same regiment in which Sir Walter Lee had once been captain—made no reply; but quietly pulled on his exquisitely fitting gloves, the very best made by Houbigants.

Sir Henry opened his pale blue eyes with as much wonder as he ever permitted himself to exhibit, and repeated his question.

“*Diable!* What trouble has *he* ever had? I never knew the fellow was afflicted that way except when his balance was low at the banker’s,” he said.

“Even *that* is a great trouble to some people, Sir Harry, sometimes,” returned Dent, with a significant smile, as he nodded to the captain, who stroked his moustache and turned rather red in the face.

“Hah, hah, hah! bravo, Dent! He, he, he! you’re fairly hit there, Rowley, by Jove!”

And the Honourable Septimus Fitzhugh hugged his left knee in his arms, so intense was his delight. The poor little artist was so accustomed to be the butt of his friend Rowley’s wit, that it was no small pleasure to him to have the laugh against that brilliant *bon esprit* for once.

“*Au revoir!*” said the lieutenant, placidly. And waving his gloved hand to the discomfited guardsman, he left the room, and was the next minute driven past the window in a Hansom cab.

“Confounded puppy!” muttered the irate wit, between his teeth.

And thus it happened that Sir Walter’s friend, either by chance or design, did not reveal what he meant by the *troubles* that gentleman had had.

“I say, Rowley, what were we talking about just now?” said the good-natured but simple-minded Fitzhugh, by way of turning aside the wrath of his companion, which the latter was but ill able to conceal.

“Talking? I didn’t know we were *talking* at all. I heard that conceited ape chattering! An unmitigated snob!” was the reply.

“Let’s see; what was it?” persisted Fitzhugh, baffled in his amicable desires, but not defeated. Hum!—oh, I know! about Lee,—of course it was.”

It was quite evident the little rebuff Sir Henry had received had completely put him out of sorts for the evening. Your great wits gain their reputation mostly by their insolence—what would the great Dr. Johnson have been if he had not been insufferably rude?—yet there is nothing that so completely staggers them as to come out of a wit combat worsted with their own weapons.

He made no reply, but rose from his seat and lit a fresh cigar.

At this moment a quick step was heard treading the marble hall. The next instant another gentleman entered the room.

"Halloa!" shouted the enthusiastic Fitzhugh, jumping up and shaking the new-comer by the hand. "Here is the very man himself!" For the new arrival was indeed no other than Sir Walter Lee.

"What, Lee?" said Sir Henry Rowley, pausing as he whiffed his newly lighted cigar. "They say if you talk of the devil he is sure to appear."

"Much obliged, Sir Henry, for the compliment," returned Lee, carelessly. "From it I gather you were talking of me. May I inquire the nature of your flattering observations?"

"We were discussing your absence from the club and the cause of it."

"Ah, I see! Well, I hope you satisfied yourselves upon both heads," rejoined Lee, quietly, and with a dreary smile.

Our hero (for so, in the absence of a better, I may continue to call him), was looking very pale, his bright and clear complexion having quite lost its usual blooming tint. Indeed, this was scarcely to be wondered at, since it was only the day following that upon which occurred the exciting interview with the game-keeper, Tom Shaw. Whatever his inward feelings were, he however concealed them, assuming a somewhat gay and flippant manner now that he was amongst his friends at the New Parthenon; possibly because such was the custom amongst the more youthful members of that distinguished club.

"I congratulate you, *mon ami*, from my heart!" said the gushing Fitzhugh.

"*Eh bien!* I thank you; but upon what?" replied Sir Walter Lee.

"Upon your good luck, of course," was the rejoinder.

"Not upon your improved looks, Lee, I must confess; for I tell you candidly, from your pale face one might imagine you had become a bankrupt rather than a baronet," added Rowley, with a negligent yawn.

"I'm sorry Sir Henry is in his facetious vein this afternoon," exclaimed Lee, laughingly. "I can stand a good deal, but I can't stand Rowley's wit; it doesn't agree with me; my stomach is too weak for it, I suppose."

"Poor fellow!—sympathises with his head, I'm afraid."

"My head is strong enough for the genuine article, *mon ami*, but not for *yours*. But, my noble patron of the brush, what have you to say for yourself? What news of a startling kind do you find in that newspaper that appears of such absorbing interest?"

The cause of this remark was an exclamation from Fitzhugh,

who had, during the last five minutes, whilst talking with the others, been running his eye over the columns of a newspaper.

"Some critic has been putting the nightcap upon his 'Sleeping Venus,' that is all," interposed Sir Henry Rowley, rising lazily and consulting his watch. "*Diable!* It is half-past six; I have an appointment at seven; I must mizzle; so adieu! *mes amis*, adieu!"

Upon which, this famous *bon esprit*, finding he was not likely to shine that evening amongst his unappreciative friends of the New Parthenon, yawned again, settled his collar and moustache before a looking-glass, put on his hat, and took his departure, to enliven, probably, a more discriminating circle, where his brilliant genius for repartee would be better estimated at its worth.

"Fitzhugh!" said Lee, as soon as Rowley was clear of the room.

"Halloa!" returned Fitzhugh.

"I am going away from England to-morrow morning. I start the first thing for Italy, where I intend staying a little time to recruit my health. I have not been very well lately."

"Lucky dog!—that is—ahem! I don't mean lucky that you've not been *well*," returned the blundering Fitzhugh, "but that you are going to pay a visit to my own darling land of genius, and that you will see once more those glorious works of art which have nursed into blossom the—the—hem! the budding souls of how many great and glorious men! You go for pleasure, of course?"

"Ye—s; at least, pleasure and—and the benefit of my health, as I have already said. I have no *business*, if that is what you mean."

"By Jove, Lee! I wish I was going with you!"

"Why don't you?"

Fitzhugh shook his little head dolorously. "I can't, old boy," he said.

"I wish you would, from my soul," replied Lee, eagerly; "I hate to be alone; or, rather, worse than alone; for my thoughts, Fitzhugh, are not always the pleasantest companions; and I should like your simple (excuse me) but cheerful and honest face to drive them away."

"I wish I could!" returned the good-natured little artist, despondently, "but I *can't*. The fact is, I am rather hard-up just now. Poverty, old fellow, is a plebeian vice, but even we aristocrats are subject to it sometimes. I wish I could improve my morals that way, but it can't be helped."

"If that is all, we'll soon get over the difficulty. I'll draw you a cheque, my boy, for what is necessary. Since I've fallen in luck's way, you know, I can indulge in such luxuries. You can

cash it, I daresay, somewhere to-night; get what you want ready, and then, to-morrow, hurrah for Rome!"

Fitzhugh readily consented, and other preliminaries were speedily discussed and settled.

"Shall we go *viâ* Paris, old boy?" said he.

"Paris? No, I think not," returned Lee, with hesitation, and turning away his face. "I am sick of Paris, with its eternal gaiety. It will be no change for me."

"*Tout comme vous voulez!* I shouldn't mind a day or two at the Louvre; but *n'importe*. I long to get to Rome. By the way, talking of Paris reminds me of what I was reading just now, when Rowley began chaffing me about my—my picture—ahem!—I suppose you haven't been to the Academy Exhibition yet, and seen the—the 'Sleeping Venus,' have you?"

"I have not had that pleasure yet," replied Lee, smiling good-humouredly; "but if you like to take me there to-morrow morning before we start——"

"Yes, yes, my dear fellow, I *would* if I were you," interrupted Fitzhugh, jumping up from his seat in the greatest excitement, and shaking his companion's hand. "Gad! Lee, it is worth seeing—hem!—that is, the *Exhibition* is, you know."

"Almost as much as the 'Sleeping Venus,' I presume; but never mind, old boy, what was it you were going to tell me you were reading about just now?"

"Oh! to be sure. It was—hem!—it was only an account of some wretched girl in Paris who, in a fit of intoxication, walked into the Seine, and drowned herself. Wasn't it a shocking affair?"

"Extremely so. Some silly little grizette disappointed in love, I suppose."

"She was not French at all, so it seems."

"Indeed!"

"No; she was English, so it says."

"Poor thing!" said Lee, in a tone of sympathy, but without manifesting any particular interest in what the other said. "Read the account of it, Fitzhugh, will you?"

"There is not much to read," replied the artist, spreading out the paper. "It is only a paragraph. Where is it?—oh! here we are."

He then read in French (the newspaper being the *Debats*) the paragraph, which was to the following effect.

A young Englishwoman of great beauty, and who was about two or three and twenty years of age, had, one evening in the previous week, while in an intoxicated state, walked over an embankment into the river, and been drowned. The woman was stated to have been known in the loose society she frequented by the name

of Catherine Fleming, that she was presumed to be married, as she wore a wedding-ring, but that little was known of her, except that she had been living infamously in a small house in the neighbourhood of the Quartier Latin, a place of doubtful reputation in the purlieu of Paris.

As Fitzhugh began to read, Sir Walter Lee was sitting listlessly staring out of window at the various carriages and pedestrians passing by. As the account progressed, the young baronet's attention became rivetted to the words. His eyes stared wildly; he sat bolt upright in the chair, in which he had been lounging, and at the arms of which he now clutched convulsively for support. When the narrative was ended, he sank back with a deep groan.

"Good heavens! Lee, what is the matter with you?" ejaculated the little painter.

Sir Walter Lee made no reply. His eyes were closed, and he appeared to have swooned away. In great trepidation and dismay, the kind-hearted Fitzhugh sprang from his seat, rang the bell for a glass of water, and was kneeling down and chafing the hands of his friend, when the latter partially recovered—sufficiently, at least, when the water arrived, to be able to take the glass into his own hands, and to moisten his lips with a draught, which appeared to revive him greatly.

"What the deuce, old fellow, has knocked you off your perch like this?" said Fitzhugh, kindly, when the other had thus far recovered.

"Where—where is the newspaper?" were the first words Lee spoke, and he looked round eagerly for the paper which contained the account which had so strangely affected him.

"No, d——n it, man! what do you want that for? I should have thought you had had enough of it for one while," exclaimed Fitzhugh, snatching it away.

"Give it me—do give it me, for one minute only, there's a good fellow!" cried Lee, entreatingly.

"You're a queer fish, I must confess," said Fitzhugh, shrugging his shoulders; "but if you will have it, you will."

Lee read the paragraph two or three times with the greatest eagerness. He then put the paper down, and apparently deeming some explanation of his behaviour necessary, he quietly informed his wondering companion that he had formerly known a person named Catherine Fleming, and that he believed she was living somewhere in Paris. He added, however, that he did not think it could be the same, now that he came to reflect upon it; nevertheless, that when he had first heard the name, it had caused him quite a shock.

Fitzhugh greeted his explanation with a loud laugh.

"This young lady, I suppose, is one of the *chères amies* of your wilder days, eh? I give you credit, old boy, for more feeling than most fellows would show, but I have hit the nail on the head, haven't I, now?—come, confess!"

Sir Walter Lee grimly smiled, and made no denial of the accusation. After sitting a few moments in silence, and drumming his fingers abstractedly upon the table, he arose from his seat, and put on his hat.

"Are you going?" demanded little Fitzhugh, in surprise. "Excuse me, old boy, but—but you haven't given me that cheque, you know."

"The cheque?" repeated Lee, not appearing for the instant to comprehend.

"To be sure. The cheque you promised me to go to glorious Rome."

"Ah! I beg your pardon, I had forgotten," Lee stammered, looking much confused. "The fact is," added Lee, after an embarrassed pause, "I have just remembered a circumstance which will prevent my starting for Rome for at least a—a *week*. Nevertheless, Fitzhugh, I shall be glad to let you have the cheque just the same. For how much shall I draw it? Do *you* go to Rome, by all means, and I most sincerely hope you will enjoy yourself."

The Honourable Septimus gazed in blank amazement at his friend. As, however, he was short of funds, he agreed to accept his companion's offer of the loan which was to enable him to visit glorious old Rome.

Lee readily drew the cheque for the sum required, shook hands with the little painter, was driven in a cab from Pall Mall to London Bridge, where he took the first train to Waverney.

JERUSALEM DELIVERED

TORQUATO TASSO, one of the greatest of Italian poets, and author of the epic whose name heads this paper, was the son of Bernardo Tasso, also a poet of no little ability. Torquato was born in March, 1544, at Sorrento, in Naples. Bernardo was attached to the court of the Prince of Salerno, who, for protesting against the establishment of the Inquisition at Naples, was banished, and the fall of the Prince involving also the ruin of those who were connected with him, the estate of Bernardo Tasso was confiscated, and himself exiled with the Prince. Retiring for two years to France, after that time Bernardo returned to Rome, to which city he also sent for his son, his wife and daughter remaining in a convent at Naples. The young poet received his education at Rome, and was early admitted into the communion of the Jesuits. But Rome was not destined to shelter him long, for Bernardo being obliged to leave that city for Pesaro, he took his son with him; and soon after Torquato was sent to the University of Padua to study jurisprudence, Bernardo Tasso being anxious to prevent his son from following a literary life, having himself suffered many sad experiences in this way. But the dry study of law had little attraction for the youthful poet, and within a year of his going to Padua, he had written a poem on the adventures of Rinaldo. Bernardo at first was mortified and grieved when he heard of his son's work, but afterwards felt proud of the genius which Torquato had displayed, and agreed to allow him to follow his evident inclinations for a literary career.

Torquato was soon after this invited to take up his residence at the University of Bologna, but he only remained at this place for a short time, studying philosophy, when, being unjustly accused of the authorship of some sarcastic verses upon the authorities of the city, he abruptly left, and shortly after returned to Padua. During his second residence here, Torquato Tasso conceived the idea of his great poem, "*Gerusalemme Liberata*" (Jerusalem Delivered), and began to carry out his project at intervals. Receiving an appointment in the house of Cardinal Este, where he spent the most prosperous years of his life, Tasso became a great favourite with the courtiers of the reigning Duke Alphonso of Ferrara, brother to the Cardinal. A friendship which he here contracted for two princesses, Lucretia and Leonora, has been a subject of much controversy among the biographers of the poet, who attribute much of Tasso's subsequent misfortunes to an unfortunate passion which he had conceived for Leonora, sister of

the duke, and to which lady the poet has dedicated many of his sonnets. Bernardo Tasso at this time was employed as secretary to the Duke of Mantua, in whose service the old poet died, Torquato being sent for to attend him in his last moments. After this event, when he had returned to Ferrara, Torquato worked sedulously at his great poem, reciting each canto as it was completed to his friends and patrons, who gave him every encouragement. While thus earnest on the "Jerusalem Delivered," Tasso was not unmindful of other works, and wrote several books, of which the most worthy was a pastoral drama called "Aminta." Visiting Paris with the Cardinal, Tasso was received in a most flattering manner, and was the recipient of many offers of preferment, but these were invariably declined, as were also many presents which were proffered him. Some misunderstanding, however, with the Cardinal, led to the poet's leaving his service and returning to Ferrara, where he was received into the household of Duke Alphonso.

Tasso completed his epic in 1575, and sent copies of it to Rome and Padua, soliciting the opinions and criticisms of scholars there upon it, before it was published. Better far would have been his fortune had he published the poem at once, for the many conflicting opinions and sneering comments fretted and annoyed the poet, who, with patient docility, received every suggestion, and either gave effect to it, or assigned a reason for not doing so. Tasso, through these annoyances, gradually became a prey to a kind of morbid melancholy, and suffered also from restless fears, through thinking himself under the continual surveillance of the spies of the Inquisition, to whom he fancied his enemies had denounced him as a heretic. The mental weakness grew upon him, till at length, after attempting to stab one of the duke's domestics, whom he believed to be a spy, he was confined in a hospital, more for the sake of his health than as a punishment. Liberated after a time, he voluntarily went to the chief of the Inquisition at Ferrara, and had himself examined on doctrinal matters, and was declared to be a true and good Catholic. Tasso afterwards retired for a time to Sorrento, but soon wearying of his seclusion there, returned again to Ferrara, where he was but coldly received by the duke, and shortly after again left that city, and led a wandering life—sometimes being kindly treated, but often driven away as a vagabond, till at last he was received into the house of a brother of Duke Alphonso in Turin. He, however, could not stay away from Ferrara, and accordingly returned there; but conceiving himself illused and neglected, lost his reason altogether, and was again placed in confinement, remaining in a hospital for lunatics for about twelve years. During this time several editions of the

"Jerusalem Delivered" were published, and as they were printed without his permission and revision, they contained many errors, and thus became another source of annoyance and trouble to the poet. After a time Tasso's reason was in a measure restored, and during the latter years of his confinement he devoted himself to study, and the composition of other poems. Liberated at last, he received a home with the Duke of Mantua, but did not remain long with him, assuming again a wandering career, and during the remaining years of his life the mental vigour of the poet was never entirely restored. Towards the close of 1594, Tasso took up his abode at Rome, the pope giving him a pension; and in the beginning of 1595 it was proposed to confer upon the poet a poetical coronation, such as that which had been conferred upon Petrarch. But April, the time fixed for the ceremony, saw the poet upon his death-bed, and on the 25th of that month, when but fifty-two years old, he died in the arms of Cardinal Cinzio—the last words of the unfortunate Tasso being: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

The greatest work of Torquato Tasso, the "Jerusalem Delivered," is an account of the campaign of 1099, a portion of the first crusade—the campaign extending over about forty days. When the Crusaders had taken Nicea and Antioch in 1097 and 1098, the long struggle had considerably weakened them, and they rested during the winter months to recruit both their strength and numbers. Assembling on the plains of Tortosa in the following spring, they marched to Jerusalem, and in July took possession of the city, after a siege of eight days. They afterwards defeated an Egyptian army, which was on its way to help Aladin, King of Jerusalem, and having thus been successful over all their enemies, Godfrey de Bouillon founded the kingdom of Jerusalem, where he reigned for about a year. The siege of the Holy City and the defeat of the Egyptian army form the groundwork of the epic of Tasso, of which the following is but a brief sketch.

The opening stanza gives the clue to the whole, and tells that the poet's theme is that

"Illustrious chief, whose righteous hands
Redeemed the tomb of Christ from impious bands."

The poem has for its opening scene the plain of Tortosa, where the Crusaders had been encamped for the winter months. Spring having come, Godfrey prepares to move his army upon the Saracens, incited thereto by the Deity, who, having perceived that the great Crusader possessed both piety and valour, had sent the angel Gabriel to counsel and encourage Godfrey in his enterprise. A council having been held of the Crusading generals, Peter the Hermit proposed that Godfrey should be invested with the supreme

command, to which all agreed; and next day the great host, composed of forces from many Christian nations, were passed in review before the general. Here the poet takes the opportunity of introducing his reader to the different notable heroes who have been led to join the Crusade, among whom Tancred and Rinaldo, both of great fame for martial prowess, are conspicuous. The army then sets forth on its way towards Jerusalem, then under the sway of Aladin, who prepares to meet the Crusaders by putting the city in a state of defence, and also devastating the surrounding country, and poisoning the streams of water on the route of the invaders. Counsell'd by a sorcerer named Ismeno, Aladin takes from the Christian temple a statue of the Virgin, meaning thereby to form a spell which shall preserve the city; but during the night the statue is stolen away from the place where he had put it. Enraged at the theft, the king having first offered large rewards for the restoration of the image, and this producing no result, he set about planning the destruction of the whole of the Christians in the city. To avert this wholesale slaughter, a beautiful Christian maid, named Sophronia, gave herself up as the person who had purloined the statue of the Virgin, and she is accordingly condemned to be burnt to death; but the executioners had not had time to fulfil the king's intention, before a youth, named Olindo, came forward and declared that he alone had done the deed for which Sophronia was doomed to suffer. The lovers, for such was the relation in which the two stood towards each other, now contended who should be the one to perish, but all this only enraged Aladin still more, and he ordered that both should die in the flames. While they thus stood at the stake, and the brands were but set alight, there advances a fierce and noble knight, having for a crest a tigress—afterwards revealed to be a warrior-maid named Clorinda—and this knight, on condition of the lovers' release, undertakes to aid the king against his foes, to which condition Aladin gladly consents.

While these events are transpiring in the city, an embassy has reached Godfrey from Egypt, and endeavoured to persuade him against proceeding further on his way to Jerusalem; but the proposals of Argantes, the Egyptian ambassador, are scornfully rejected. The Crusaders then proceed on their march, and at last reach the heights which overlook the city—

“Behold, Jerusalem in prospect lies !
Behold, Jerusalem salutes their eyes !
At once a thousand tongues repeat the name,
And hail Jerusalem with loud acclaim.

To sailors thus, who, wandering o'er the main,
Have long explored some distant coast in vain,

In seas unknown and foreign regions lost,
 By stormy winds and faithless billows tost,
 If chance at length th' expected land appear,
 With joyful shouts they hail it from afar ;
 They point with rapture to the wished-for shore,
 And dream of former toils and fears no more.

Each took th' example by their chieftains led,
 With naked feet the hallowed soil they tread ;
 Each threw his martial ornaments aside,
 The crested helmets, with their plummy pride ;
 To humble thoughts their lofty hearts they bend,
 And down their cheeks the pious tears descend."

The Saracens, seeing the Crusaders near at hand, now prepare for battle, Clorinda being the first to attack, and she puts the Franks to flight. In this affray, Tancred and Clorinda meet and charge each other, when the helmet of the Saracen is struck off with a blow from the spear of the Frankish hero—

" Loose in the wind her golden tresses flowed,
 And now a maid confessed to all she stood."

Tancred at once recognised her as a fair infidel he had met in a previous expedition against Persia, for whom he had long cherished love in his heart ; and now, even in the brunt of battle, the Crusader began to plead his suit. Clorinda, however, will not listen to him, and insists on the combat being proceeded with ; but they are almost immediately separated by a body of routed Saracens, who are making their way towards Jerusalem. A complete victory has been gained by the armies of Godfrey, but with the loss of many of his bravest knights ; among the slain being Dudon, the leader of a body of Crusaders called the Adventurous Band.

A complete change of scene takes place at this part of the epic, and we are at once ushered into the presence of the powers of darkness, with Satan, in all his fearful majesty, seated on a throne.

" Full in the midst imperial Pluto sat ;
 His arm sustained the massy sceptre's weight ;
 Nor rock nor mountain lifts its head so high,
 E'en towering Atlas that supports the sky,
 A hillock, if compared with him, appears,
 When his large front and ample horns he rears.
 A horrid majesty his looks expressed,
 Which scattered terror, and his pride increased ;
 His sanguine eyes with baleful venom stare,
 And, like a comet, cast a dismal glare ;
 A length of beard, descending o'er his breast,
 In rugged curls, conceals his hairy chest ;
 And, like a whirlpool in the roaring flood,
 Wide gapes his mouth, obscene with clotted blood.
 As smoking fires from burning Etna rise,
 And steaming sulphur that infects the skies,
 So from his throat the cloudy sparkles came,
 With pestilential breath and ruddy flame."

The infernal monarch is surrounded by his counsellors, whom he has summoned together to deliberate upon the means whereby they may defeat the purposes of the Christian army now beleaguering Jerusalem. The poet, after giving the vivid description of the arch traitor, describes the appearance of his court, and then gives the result of their conference. Satan first reminds his satellites of their former state of bliss, of man being created their superior, and then urges them to take measures to defeat the evident purpose of the Almighty of giving over Jerusalem to the followers of His Son, who had conquered them a second time when He descended to the earth. The fiendish council agree to exercise all the powers they possess over human beings to destroy the Christian army, by raising dissensions and discord among the leaders. After the council was dissolved, the fiends immediately proceeded to the Christian camp, and began to ply their wily arts. One of them, by means of a fair sorceress called Armida, niece of the Sultan of Damascus, undertakes to seduce the Christian knights from their allegiance by means of her charms, and the sorceress accordingly finds her way to the tents, and she there tells a story of fictitious wrongs to excite compassion. Falling at the feet of Godfrey, Armida informs him that she has been deprived of the throne of Damascus, of which she is the heir, by her uncle, who had also attempted her life, and she pleads with Godfrey to grant her a small band of his knights to aid in regaining her heritage, promising great rewards for any service that might thus be rendered to her. Godfrey at first declines to part with any of his knights for this purpose, but on being warmly remonstrated with by his brother Eustace, a reluctant consent is given for ten of the knights accompanying Armida to Damascus. Ten, however, did not suffice the fair sorceress, who now began to ply her seductive charms to gain over a larger number; and consequently, after the ten had been chosen by lot, many of the knights—each of whom had been led to believe that he was her favoured lover—amongst them Godfrey's brother Eustace, deserted the Christian camp to follow the fortunes of Armida. Other dissensions and troubles took place also at this time, and in a dispute between Rinaldo and Gernando, son of the King of Norway, as to the leadership of the Adventurous Band, the latter was slain; and Rinaldo, fearing the disgrace of a trial and imprisonment for fighting in the camp, fled to Egypt. Thus enfeebled by the loss of many warriors, Godfrey was further perplexed by the loss of his convoys with supplies for his army, and also by the rumoured approach of the Egyptians.

Within the city of Jerusalem, around whose walls the Crusaders were encamped, the leaders of the Saracens began to be impatient of their own inaction, and Argantes sought leave of King Aladin to

challenge the Christian leader to single combat, and to this the king consented, ordering Clorinda, however, to follow secretly with a body of soldiers. Tancred having accepted the challenge of Argantes, approached to meet the pagan warrior, but the Crusader perceives Clorinda standing on a height, and he immediately becomes as a "helpless statue." Another Crusader, named Otho, perceiving this, at once stepped forward and took the place of Tancred; but Argantes acting unfairly to Otho, the latter is defeated, and Tancred resumes the combat, which lasted till night-fall, and both warriors being severely wounded, the heralds proclaimed a truce for six days. Argantes is tended by one of the king's daughters named Erminia; but this lady had at one time been a prisoner in the Christian camp, and her feelings being interested in Tancred, she devised a plan whereby she might gain his tent, and bestow her cares upon the knight she loved, in preference to his rival, Argantes. During the absence of Clorinda, therefore, she went to the warrior maid's chamber, and Erminia donned the armour of that lady, and then took her way to the camp of the Christians. When outside Jerusalem, and reaching a height overlooking the camp, she despatched a messenger to inform Tancred that a lady skilled in healing arts was willing to trust his honour, and care for and assist him. Tancred willingly assented; but while Erminia was waiting the return of her messenger, the moon shone out upon her as she stood on the height, and—

" Her snow-white vesture caught the silver beam,
Her polished arms returned a trembling gleam,
And on her lofty crest the tigress raised
With all the terrors of Clorinda blazed."

The sentinels round the camp now perceived her, and thinking Erminia to be Clorinda, whose armour she wore, they rushed forward to capture her, but she fled. Tancred was now informed of what had taken place, and he also followed in pursuit, in order to protect her. Erminia wandered into a wood, where she met with a shepherd who conducted her to his hut, and here she determines to remain till the advent of less troublous times. Tancred, weak and wounded as he was, followed in pursuit for some time, till at length he lost his way, and in seeking to regain the Christian camp, was betrayed into the power of the sorceress Armida, who confined him in her castle.

The truce of six days by this time had expired, and Argantes again appeared before the Crusaders to renew the combat; but Tancred being nowhere to be found, an old knight named Raymond is chosen by lot to oppose Argantes. Raymond invokes the name of heaven to protect him as David was when he fought Goliath of Gath, and he is rendered invincible; but as the combat proceeds, an

arrow is shot at Raymond from the walls of the city, and the result of this breach of faith is a general battle, in which the Christians are worsted. One of the Pagan warriors, named Solyman, with a number of followers, shortly after attempt a night-attack on the Christian camp, but their stealthy approach being discovered, the Crusaders turn out and give them battle. Agantes and Clorinda, with their followers, also issue from Jerusalem to aid Solyman, and dreadful slaughter ensues. One of the Crusaders, named Argillan, shows great prowess in the battle—

"So fierce he shows,
While in his look undaunted courage glows;
He bounds with headlong speed the war to meet,
And scarcely prints the dust beneath his feet."

During the battle Argillan slays a beautiful boy, a great favourite of Solyman, who tries to rescue him, but is too late; and now in turn Argillan meets his fate, for Solyman,

"Cleaves his head beneath the weighty blow—
A wound well worthy of so great a foe!"

The Crusaders are on this occasion victorious, and the King of Jerusalem orders a retreat, which Argantes and Clorinda obey with reluctance, while Solyman, in great grief, bends his way to Gaza, purposing to join the King of Egypt. On his way thither, however, he is met by Ismeno, the sorcerer, who persuades him to return to Jerusalem, and he is conveyed back to the city in a chariot which melts into air on their arrival. Entering Jerusalem by an underground passage, Solyman is conducted to the council-chamber of Aladin, where he hears the deliberations of the king and his counsellors regarding the surrender of the city. To this Solyman fiercely objects—

"First in one fold shall wolves and lambs remain,
One nest the serpent and the dove contain,
Ere with the Franks one land behold our state
On any terms but everlasting hate."

The Crusaders meanwhile were rejoicing over their victory, which they have discovered was mainly due to the arrival of the body of knights who had fled with Armida; that sorceress, finding that she could not persuade them to serve against Godfrey, had sent them to Damascus as prisoners, but they were met on the way and delivered by Rinaldo. Preparations were shortly after made for an assault upon the Holy City, and the Crusaders marched towards the Mount of Olives chanting hymns. In the morning of the appointed day, a general assault took place, and many hours elapsed before a breach was effected in the city walls; and in this assault the leader of the crusading host was himself wounded, and numbers slain. Clorinda had taken no part in the battle of the day, but during

the night she sought out Argantes, and told him her purpose of stealing out and setting fire to the tower from which the Crusaders attacked the city. Argantes agreed to accompany her, and Aladin having sanctioned the enterprise, Ismeno provides them with two sulphurous balls, which will cause a sudden and speedy conflagration. Clorinda clothes herself in black armour, and issues forth attended only by Argantes and an aged slave. This slave tries to persuade Clorinda against the enterprise, and relates the story of her birth, which has hitherto been concealed from her; and from this history it appears that the warrior-maid should have been educated in the Christian faith, and the slave states that he has often been reproached in dreams for not having had her baptised. Clorinda does not doubt the truth of her aged attendant's story, being conscious of having had visions of the same import herself, but will not consent to abandon the enterprise upon which she is bent. The slave again tries to urge her, saying that on the preceding night the visions had been repeated, with the additional revelation that Clorinda's own death was near at hand.

Clorinda, with unshaken resolve, and Argantes had not proceeded far on their way when they were perceived by the Crusaders, and they had then to fight their way to the tower, which they were successful in firing. In making their retreat, however, Clorinda received a wound from one of the Crusaders, and while delaying on the way to punish the soldier who had wounded her, the gates were closed. Thus prevented from escaping, Clorinda mixes at first with the Crusaders, and afterwards withdraws from their company; but Tancred has been watching the knight in the black armour, and following, challenges the stranger to fight, and in the darkness the two prepare for mortal combat. Throughout the night the strife continued, and as morning began to dawn the two rested awhile and sternly gazed at each other. Tancred demanded then to know the name of his opponent, a subject upon which the disguised Clorinda refused to give him any information, and only gave him to understand that his opponent was one of the knights who had fired the Christians' tower. With increased fury Tancred now renewed the combat, and many wounds were given and received in the fray—

"But now behold the fated hour was come—
 The moment chartered with Clorinda's doom.
 Full at her bosom Tancred aimed the sword—
 The thirsty steel her lovely bosom gored;
 The sanguine current stained with blushing red
 The embroidered robe that o'er her form was spread.
 She feels approaching death in every vein;
 Her trembling limbs no more her weight sustain;
 But still the Christian knight renews the blow,
 And threatening, presses close his vanquished foe.

She, as she fell, with moving voice addressed
 The chief, and thus preferred her last request—
 To the fair infidel such grace was given,
 That though in life she spurned the laws of Heaven,
 Yet now, submitting in her dying hour,
 Her humble spirit owned a Saviour's power—
 'Friend, thou hast conquered ! I forgive the stroke ;
 O let me pardon, too, from thee invoke !
 Not for this mortal frame I urge my prayer,
 For this I know no fear, and ask no care ;
 'Tis for my sinful soul I pity crave :
 O wash my guilt in the baptismal wave !'

Not distant far, emerging from the hill,
 In gentle murmurs rolled a scanty rill ;
 Hither the chieftain hied without delay,
 Here filled his casque, then took his pensive way,
 Back to fulfil the strange and sad demand ;
 But some portentous instinct shakes his hand,
 As from her face the glittering helm he draws ;
 The features now appear—he sees, he knows !

O knowledge best unknown ! distracting sight !
 Scarcely she lives, and speechless stands the knight ;
 Yet rousing all his strength, with holy zeal
 Prepares the sacred office to fulfil.

While from his lips he gave the words of grace,
 A smile of transport brightened in her face ;
 Happy in death, she seemed her joy to tell ;
 And bade for heaven an empty world farewell.

O'er her fair face death's livid hue arose,
 So mixed with violets, the lily shows ;
 Her eyes to heaven the dying virgin raised ;
 The sun, the sky, with kindly pity gazed,
 And since the power of speech her lips denied,
 Her clay-cold hand the pledge of peace supplied.
 So fled the spirit from her peaceful breast,
 So seemed she but as lulled in quiet rest."

A band of Crusaders now drew near the spot where the combat had taken place, and they conveyed the body of Clorinda to their tents, while Tancred became utterly inconsolable with grief, and tearing the bandages from his wounds, seemed to seek for death, though both Peter the Hermit and Godfrey sought to console him, and it was not till Clorinda herself appeared to him in a dream that he became reconciled.

The Crusaders now began to search for materials to construct a new tower, but the only forest which was near their camp had a spell thrown over it by Ismeno, the sorcerer, which prevented the necessary timber from being obtained there. Tancred alone of all the knights defied the enchantments of the forest, and, entering it, found, that though earthquakes shook the ground beneath, and thunders rolled above, and flaming fire threatened to hinder his

progress, as others had found before when they had tried to enter the forest, yet, as he moved undauntedly onward, these awful dangers ever receded before him, till at last the brave Crusader reached a cypress grove, the trees in which were covered with signs. Some of these he could interpret, and they were found to signify that the trees of the grove were the abodes of the spirits of those who had fallen in defence of Jerusalem. Sternly resolved, however, in his purpose, and unmoved by the sad sighing of human voices among the trees, he drew his sword and struck at one of them, but was horrified to see that from where he struck a stream of blood began to issue forth, and a voice, which appeared to be that of Clorinda, bewailed in moving accents the disturbing of her repose. Tancred at this sorrowfully and regretfully returned to the Christian camp and acknowledged his failure.

Godfrey, the leader of the Christian army, fatigued and careworn, lay down to rest in his tent one night soon after this, and as he slept he dreamt that he was carried up to the gates of heaven, and was there encouraged by the spirit of a deceased warrior to prosecute his enterprise against Jerusalem. Strengthened by this vision, Godfrey convened a council on the following morning of the various leaders of the Christian host, at which it was agreed to send away an embassy to procure the return of Rinaldo, whom they believed to be in Ascalon. Ubald and Charles the Dane were accordingly directed to search out the fugitive knight, and on their way they meet with a magician who reveres and serves God; he approves of the purpose of the two Crusaders, tells them the way to go, and gives them a golden wand wherewith to overcome the enchantments which they will meet. Pursuing the directions the magician gives them, they cross seas and travel many leagues, till they reach the Fortunate Isles, on one of which is the castle of the sorceress Armida, where she has decoyed Rinaldo. Many alluring temptations are laid before the two knights, and many fearful dangers are presented, but all are easily overcome and set aside by the aid of the magic wand. Reaching the palace of Armida at last, they perceive the sorceress and Rinaldo together,

"One proud to rule, one prouder to obey,
He blest in her, and she in beauty's sway."

Waiting aside a little till Armida has left the knight alone, they then approach and invite Rinaldo again to join the ranks of the Christians, and, ashamed of his present life, he at once consents to accompany the Crusaders without taking leave of the fair enchantress. But their departure has been perceived, and the sorceress follows and endeavours to persuade Rinaldo to return with her, confessing that though she deceived him at first, by reason of her

hatred to his faith, she now has begun to love him, and even proffers to go with and serve him as a slave if he will only consent to take her along with him. Rinaldo, however, now thoroughly aroused from the power of enchantment, will neither return with Armida nor take her with him; thus scorned, she threatens to be revenged on him and all the Christian host. The knights soon after arrive at the camp, and Rinaldo being at once reinstated in Godfrey's favour, is soon after sent to try his fortune in the enchanted forest, which presents now no dangers to him, but rather attractive and seductive allurements.

"Where'er he treads, the earth her tribute pours,
In gushing springs, or voluntary flowers:
Here blooms the lily, there the fragrant rose;
Here spouts a fountain, there a riv'let flows;
From every spray the liquid mauna trills;
And honey from the softening bark distils.
Again the strange, the pleasing sound he hears,
Of plaints, and music, mingling in his ears:
Yet nought appears that mortal voice can frame,
Nor harp, nor timbrel, whence the music came."

These attractions are principally due to Armida, who, after being deserted by Rinaldo, had proceeded to Gaza, where she appeared as an archer seated in a chariot, followed by a hundred maidens similarly armed, each attended by a page on a white steed, and she offered herself and her kingdom as a prize to the pagan warrior who should bring her Rinaldo's head. Rinaldo at last draws near a myrtle tree, and, as he approaches, nymphs appear in numbers, who dance around, and endeavour to dissuade him from touching the tree, from whose trunk Armida herself issues, and endeavours to entice the knight to that affectionate intercourse they had formerly enjoyed. Rinaldo, however, is firm, and draws his sword to cleave the tree; and at this Armida transforms herself into a giant with fifty arms and shields, while the nymphs appear as Cyclops, who threaten the knight, if he molests the tree; but, undaunted and resolved, the myrtle is hewn down by the knight, and all the enchantments are at once dispelled, with their attendant earthquakes and thunders.

New towers are now constructed by the Crusaders, and another assault is made upon the Holy City, in which Rinaldo greatly distinguishes himself, while Ismeno, the sorcerer, is killed by the falling of a rock as he is preparing new enchantments against the Christians; and at last the banner of the Crusaders floats proudly over the battlements of Jerusalem. During the battle, Tancred meets with Argantes, and the latter taunts the Christian with cowardice in so far as he failed to keep his engagement to single combat, and the two retire to a secluded spot to fight—for one, at

least, his last fight. Reaching a suitable place, Argantes turned for a moment to look upon the Holy City, and the sight of the hateful banner of the Crusaders upon its walls nerved him still more strongly for the combat. Though well-matched, Tancred had twice his adversary's life at his command, each time the pagan warrior refusing the offered mercy, and renewing the combat,

"Again his hand the courteous victor stayed;
 'Submit, O chief, preserve thy life,' he said;
 But while he paused, the fierce insidious foe
 Full at his heels directs a treacherous blow,
 And threats aloud. Then flash from Tancred's eyes
 The sparks of wrath, while thus the hero cries:
 'And dost thou, wretch, such base return afford,
 For life so long preserved from Tancred's sword?'
 He said; and as he spoke, no more delayed,
 But through his visor plunged the avenging blade.
 Thus fell Argantes: as he lived, he died;
 Untamed his soul, unconquered was his pride;
 Nor drooped his spirit at the approach of death,
 But threats, and rage, employed his latest breath."

While these two warriors were thus settling their own quarrel, the Christians have entered the city, and there committed great slaughter; the King of Jerusalem, and what remained of his army, taking refuge within the Tower of David, there intending to remain till an Egyptian army, which was on its way to aid in repelling the Crusaders, should come to their help. Godfrey, anxious to learn the plans of the Egyptian leaders, sends off a spy, having an intimate knowledge of the Egyptian tongue, to watch their progress. This spy, being a servant of Tancred, is recognised by Erminia, who was in the Egyptian camp, and she secretly reveals their plans to the spy, and returns with him to the Christians, where immediate preparations are made to defeat their new enemy. Leaving a portion of his troops to watch the Tower of David, Godfrey issues from Jerusalem, and attacks the Egyptians, who are defeated with great loss. While the battle is raging, a sortie is made by the Saracens who are cooped up in the tower; Aladin is met and slain by a Christian knight, but Solyman forces his way through to the battle, and lends great aid to the Egyptians, but he is eventually slain by Rinaldo. During the battle Armida also makes her appearance, and desecrating Rinaldo, hesitatingly between hate and love, shoots an arrow at him; but it harmed not the knight, who turned aside from her in scorn. At the fall of Solyman, Armida strove to make her escape, and, casting away her armour, was about to commit suicide by plunging an arrow into her bosom, when Rinaldo, who had marked her flight from the field of battle, came up in pursuit of her at this moment, and stayed her hand. The knight, so recently from the scene of strife, began at once to urge his love, and

proffering to become her champion, swore to regain her dominions, and restore her to the throne of her fathers; and now—

“ Her anger, late so fierce, dissolves away,
And gentle passions bear a milder sway.”

Godfrey by this time has driven all his enemies from the field, and the long-wished-for object of the Crusaders has been gained, for the Holy City is completely in their possession—

“ And as yet the day
Gave from the western waves the parting ray,
Swift to the walls the glorious victor rode,
The domes where Christ had made his blest abode.
Still in his blood-stained vest, with princely train,
The impatient chieftain sought the sacred fane;
There hung his arms, there poured his votive prayer,
Kissed his loved Saviour's tomb, and bowed adoring there.”

* * * * *

The epic of which the preceding forms but a brief epitome has ever been one of the most popular works in the Italian language—time having only rendered its position more secure. Eminent critics have, however, written severely against the prominent place given to enchantments in “Jerusalem Delivered;” but there is no doubt that in the days of Tasso these things were thoroughly believed in, and the poet only availed himself of such aids in consequence of that belief. The poets give the Saracenic hosts their victories through the help of evil spirits; and when the victory lies with the Crusaders, he ever attributes their success to the aid of Heaven; and he thus again meets the spirit of the age in which the poet lived, for the religion of his times was greatly in unison with whatever was related to chivalry and martial prowess. Voltaire, in his essay on “Epic Poetry,” says—“It was certainly a master-stroke in Tasso to render Aladin odious. The reader would otherwise have been necessarily interested for the Mahommedans against the Christians, whom he would have been tempted to consider as a band of vagabond thieves, who had agreed to ramble from the heart of Europe, in order to devastate a country they had no right to, and to massacre in cold blood a venerable prince, more than fourscore years old, and his whole people, against whom they had no pretence of complaint. Tasso has, with great judgment, represented them very differently. In his ‘Jerusalem,’ they appear to be an army of heroes, marching under a chief of exalted virtue, to rescue from the tyranny of infidels a country which had been consecrated by the birth and death of a God. The subject of his poem, considered in this view, is the most sublime that can be imagined; he has treated it with all the dignity of which it is worthy, and has even rendered it not less interesting than it is elevated.” Lamartine, also, in speaking of the motives which

made the poet write the epic, says—" Urged by piety no less than by the muse, Tasso dreamed of a crusade of poetic genius, aspiring to equal, by the glory and the sanctity of his songs, the crusades of the lance he was about to celebrate. . . . Religion, chivalry, poetry, the glory of heaven and earth, the hope of eternal fame, all combined to urge him to the undertaking."

COELO ICTUS.

UNDER THE VINES

UNDER the vines, where the golden sun is shining,
And the purple sky glares hot above,
Fleet fly the hours as a fairy dream,
Under the vines with the girl I love.

Ah! what care I, though life be short,
Whilst around my heart her love entwines?
Though to-morrow we die, we have lived our life,
And we are happy under the vines.

This is the song that has ever been sung,
The tale that has ever been told,
Since the poet's harp first woke to song,
When the world was young that is now so old.

And the words that I spoke to my darling to-night,
As idly we watched the little town,
Were spoken a thousand years ago,
Under the vines as the sun went down.

W. E. A. A.

“NO CARDS”

CHAPTER III.

MR. BINDWEED's employment at the Government office referred to was of a nature which did not bind him with strictness to the hours of the officers who were on the establishment, consequently it was not regarded as a strange occurrence that, on the day with which our tale is now concerned, he did not put in an appearance at his desk until one o'clock p.m. To a man of his tact and deceptive ability, the task of referring to the entry he sought without attracting attention was not a difficult one; and here we may do Mr. Bindweed the justice to say that he had no intention of destroying or in any way tampering with the entry in question. He too well knew the danger of such a risk to think for a moment of running it. The limit of his ambition was to deceive Mr. Larpent, and fraudulently to earn his £60.

But success here implied further trouble and manœuvring than was involved in the mere production of a clever copy of the marriage entry. A general index to all marriages was in existence at the office—one open to the public daily, and one which Mr. Larpent would be sure to consult, either personally or by means of an agent, in order to satisfy himself that his agent No. 1 had done his work and earned his reward. It was necessary, therefore, in order that Mr. Larpent might be successfully deceived, that the names of John Taylor and Arabella Smithard, which were to be found in the marriage indexes for the year 1861, should, at all events for a time, be withdrawn from public observation.

A little consideration convinced Mr. Bindweed that he need be in no anxiety respecting one of these names. There would, of course, be hosts of John Taylors married during the year in question. No person deputed to find the marriage would dream of wading through these hosts, while, by looking for the uncommon name of Smithard, he might reduce his labours to mere child's play. It was clear that John Taylor might take care of himself; Arabella Smithard was the only name respecting which Mr. Bindweed need give himself any trouble.

No sooner was the regular business of the day over than Mr. Bindweed made a clever excuse for visiting the public room where searches took place, and for examining the indexes in which his main difficulty lay.

Fate strangely furthered his plans. In opening the volume

which contained the name he sought, he discovered that a single leaf therein had become loosened by the wear and tear involved in continual reference to the book by the public. The stitches which originally held it had given way, and had left it completely detached. This leaf, as Bindweed's eye at first informed him, was covered with William Smiths, and the page preceding it also bore a column of the same common name. A second glance, however, showed him that the loose page was not entirely occupied, as he had supposed. No; the last name entered upon it was the very name he wanted—the name Arabella Smithard. Capital! He might remove this sheet until all danger of scrutiny from Mr. Larpent or his deputies should be at an end, and might then replace it, without fear of discovery either of the deficiency while it was absent, or of its replacement when it was restored. The voluminousness of the William Smiths had come to the plotter's aid. The Charles Smithard heading the succeeding page would fit on with unimpeachable lexicographical sequence, either to the latter entry of the loosened sheet, or to that of the one preceding it. The little pale man, full of his £60, quietly rolled up the loose leaf, and placing it in his pocket, restored the volume to its proper position, and noiselessly left the room.

The harder half of his task was thus easily over: the remaining half he now set himself to accomplish. He rummaged about in the office until he found an ancient, damp, and mouldy marriage sheet, and upon this he produced, in weak yellowish ink—of the type usually to be found in vestries—a common-place looking copy of the marriage entry of John Taylor and Arabella Smithard. The work was not begun until the coast was clear, and interruption unlikely. It was finished with perfect success and without discovery. Mr. Bindweed now cleverly pierced and tore the edge of the leaf, to give the impression that it had been forcibly removed from its volume; and then with keen satisfaction scanned the results of his labour. It was only the signature of the officiating clergyman at the foot of the page of which (as to handwriting) he had been at the pains to make a *fac-simile*. But it appeared to him that never had his success been so complete as in the imitation of that signature. It was well, he reflected, that such should be the case. Mr. Larpent was more than usually wide-awake, and had doubtless well acquainted himself with the handwriting of the Rev. Andrew Strong. The remainder of the entry, which might have been transcribed from the original by any one whom it might have pleased the clergyman so to employ, was of course open to no question by a person in Mr. Larpent's position. Mr. Bindweed was satisfied that he had gained his £60.

Eight o'clock again found him in the presence of his patron and

employer. The clever little rascal was now thoroughly on his guard. He represented with a woe-begone face the risks which he had been running, and the nerve that he had needed in the accomplishment of his task. Success, however, complete and triumphant, had, he explained, attended and crowned his bold and dangerous effort. He told the story, not of a leaf abstracted from the indexes, but of an entry cleverly erased therefrom; finally producing his copy of the marriage record itself, with the affirmation that no further proof of the obnoxious ceremony now remained in the Record Office of Hatches, Matches, and Despatches.

Mr. Larpent, on his part, did his clever best. By sundry and sudden questionings, he tested his *employé's* fidelity on every side. He scanned the water-mark upon the paper, which gave a date; but here Bindweed had been on his guard, and was well prepared for scrutiny. He examined the writing minutely, but no vulgar flourish betrayed the true penman; the entry was written, from end to end, in a neat and somewhat feminine hand. He lastly concentrated his attention upon the signature of the Rev. Andrew Strong; and this, too, deceived and satisfied him. The careless clerical scrawl was imitated with an easy fidelity which completely and finally disarmed his suspicions. Tearing the sheet into fragments, he verily believed, as he threw them into the fire, that the last written evidence of the marriage which he wished to bury in oblivion was indeed and in truth destroyed; that Frank Thorboye could now produce no legal document by which he might show himself free to marry Rose Martyn. One final check, however, he resolved to practise upon Mr. Bindweed's work. He resolved to send—as the wary Bindweed had supposed he would do—to search the marriage indexes. If nothing were found, he could not help admitting to himself that Bindweed would be entitled to his £60.

Mr. Bindweed, guessing the cause of the delay in the payment of his reward, and being, as the reader is aware, fully prepared to meet any official search on the morrow, did not complain of the postponement, but fixed an hour on the next day for calling again, at which time it was agreed that his stipulated fee should be forthcoming. As he retired Mr. Larpent gave a large, long sigh of relief. Now that his documentary difficulties were (as he supposed) surmounted, he began to see his way with clearness, and to breathe freely. Yes, it was *everything*, he reflected, to have disposed of the written proofs of the marriage; for, by happy accident, the only other proof of any consequence—the living person of the eccentric and daring Arabella Taylor—was not likely to come in his way. That lady (as rumour hinted, upon careful questioning) had retired into penitent seclusion, and was now devoting herself, with the energy which she had formerly expended upon less praiseworthy

enterprises, to works of charity and mercy. If Frank Thorboye should ever conceive the idea of bringing forward this repentant female as a witness to his bachelorhood; and if—supposing her present mood to be correctly represented—she would doubtless be ready to come before the public in such a capacity upon being made aware of Thorboye's situation, the boylike intelligence might easily be gulled once more—the honest eyes easily be blinded by a judicious injection of a little well-selected dust.

Reasoning thus, Mr. Larpent fell into a fit of rejoicing at Mrs. Taylor's convenient penitence and retirement; and not forgetting others, as it would seem, in the enjoyment of his own good fortune, he indulged a congratulatory thought on behalf of that worthy personage, Taylor, whose wishes on the subject of his erratic wife he could easily understand.

"Poor Taylor!" he muttered, showing his ivory teeth; "lucky for him that Arabella is pleased to subside in this accommodating style!"

CHAPTER IV.

OUR story may now best be continued in the following correspondence between Frank Thorboye and Lucifer Larpent:—

"Jermyn-street, St. James's, 17th November, 1864.

"DEAR LARPENT,—Very bad to-day, and in bed. No success yesterday at Westhaven. Came up by a late train, half dead. I questioned the clerk, but he seems almost foolish, and can remember nothing to assist me. One thing about the registers strikes me as being very odd. Some entries are entirely missing from the year 1861; indeed, I think it is just at the very place where Arabella Smithard's marriage should appear that this deficiency occurs. I saw a duplicate book as well as that which is generally searched. Here precisely the same numbers are also wanting as in the other volume. Tell me whether you attach any importance to this circumstance; and if not, how can you account for the absence of the entry we want. Excuse this writing. I am so ill I can scarcely hold my pen. Heaven help me! Send an immediate answer, or come to

"Yours affectionately,

"FRANK THORBOYE.

"L. LARPENT, ESQ."

"Bedford-row, 17th November, 1864.

"DEAR THORBOYE,—This is very unfortunate, and perplexing. I have thought a great deal of what you say respecting the missing entries, and I am unable to suppose that the deficiency represents any fraudulent abstraction of a leaf or leaves from the register-book. The general public, I suppose, have no access to the duplicate copy. If, then, they had tampered with one book, the other would still remain a witness against them. The fact of the agreement between the two volumes seems to suggest

the idea that there was an error *in the original binding of one*, by which certain leaves (and with them certain printed numbers) were omitted. Upon discovering this omission, the clergyman would naturally take sheets from the duplicate volume, in order to make the two correspond. I am obliged to confess, therefore, that I can draw no comfort for you from the deficiency which you describe. I am afraid that, by some unlucky omission, the marriage entries were not duly made at the time the wedding was solemnised. You are, perhaps, aware that a copy of every marriage which is duly registered is sent, after a certain time, to the Record Office of Hatches, Matches, and Despatches, in this city. Upon receiving your letter, I immediately despatched a confidential messenger to that office, instructing him to search with the greatest care for the marriage which we require. (I should have made this move before sending you to Westhaven, had it not struck me that it would relieve your feelings to investigate the matter yourself upon the spot where the marriage occurred.) After a painstaking investigation, the messenger has returned to tell me that no record of the marriage in question can be discovered. The name 'Arabella Smithard,' which I instructed him to search for, as being less common than 'John Taylor,' is to be found nowhere; and this it is which convinces me that the marriage has never properly been recorded.

"I am much distressed that you should be ill at this perplexing juncture. Pray get the best advice directly. I shall see you as soon as possible. Your note to Miss Martyn was despatched immediately you left me.

"Yours,
"L. L."

"FRANCIS THORBOYE, Esq."

"Jermyn-street, St. James's, 2nd December, 1864.

DEAR LARPENT,—A thousand thanks to you for your great kindness to me during my sickness and trouble. I cannot help seeing that the advice you gave me, when you called yesterday, is advice which, sooner or later, I must follow, and that I must prepare myself to meet the awful calamity of final separation from my darling Rose. When I wrote to her, I promised immediately to produce such evidence as would acquit me, and I am no nearer the production of that evidence to-day than I was at first. Even she herself must doubt me by this time.

"Was there ever such an unfortunate man as I? In the names of truth and justice, where can the lost register be? But I am forgetting: your theory is, that the marriage was never properly registered at all. God help me to bear the dire consequences of this omission! Oh, my dear fellow! I am paying now—how heavily no one can know—for the act of precipitate folly which I was guilty of at the outset of my manhood.

"My kind, good doctor—to whom I have told the cause of my present illness and misery—recommends for me immediate change of scene. I shall try to follow his advice, and shall go abroad so soon as I am able to move.

"Might we not, do you think, as a last resource, track the unhappy

woman who has been the unfortunate cause of all my sorrow? Would not a statement from her supply the place of the missing document? Surely she could be persuaded to make such a statement. Do think of this!

"Good-bye, old fellow!

"Yours affectionately,

"FRANK THORBOYE."

"L. LARPENT, ESQ."

"Bedford-row, 3rd December, 1864.

"DEAR THORBOYE,—Your suggestion with regard to the finding of Arabella Taylor gave me, upon a first perusal of your note, a ray of hope and comfort. But upon further considering the matter, I must candidly admit that such hope has been completely dispelled.

"Supposing that we found Mrs. Taylor, and that she were willing to make such a statement as you suggest, could we hope that the testimony thus borne would weigh with Mr. Martyn? It greatly pains me to acknowledge that this question must be answered in the negative. We could support the woman's solitary assertion by no documentary evidence whatever; how, then, could we expect Mr. Martyn to believe us? He would infallibly suspect her of being a paid accomplice in a conspiracy to prove a lie.

"I feel bound to be precise and direct, but it costs me a great effort to write thus. I should have called upon you this morning, but a press of business engagements has prevented me from doing so.

"Yours,

"FRANCIS THORBOYE, ESQ."

"L. L."

"Jermyn-street, St. James's, 6th December, 1864.

"DEAR LARPENT,—I see only too plainly the force of the objections expressed in your note received three days since. I wish I had been able to reply to that note earlier, but I have been far too miserable to make the effort. I went out of doors, for the first time, yesterday. I was very anxious to call at your chambers, which are closely associated in my mind with the happiness now at an end for ever, but my courage failed me.

"Good-bye! I am just leaving for Paris. Dear fellow! it is only your sympathy and fidelity which nerve me to make this effort. Heaven bless you for your helpful counsels and for your priceless friendship! I shall never forget your kindness and devotion. Take compassion upon me still, and let me hear, now and then, how *she* is—my poor, lost little Rose!

"Address, for the present, *Hotel du Louvre*.

"Yours ever affectionately,

"FRANK THORBOYE."

"L. LARPENT, ESQ."

CHAPTER V.

LARPENT had succeeded. The plotting dictated by his vehement

passion for Rose Martyn had so far gone well. When he found that Thorboye was really out of the way, he experienced intellectual sensations akin to those of the child who, with a puzzle-map of Europe before him, beholds all intricacies, even those of the petty German States, mastered and arranged, and triumphantly contemplates the ease of his remaining task, as exhibited in the bold and simple joints of the Russian empire. Yes, his road was clear now—there was no longer any external barrier between him and the woman he loved. And further, he would now prefer his suit at great advantage. Auld Robin Gray (taken as the symbol of a full purse) is always, as Mr. Larpent was well aware, certain of the support of an impecunious papa; and it was not by accident that Mr. Martyn's pecuniary situation had been rendered one of dependence on the aspirant for the hand of Mr. Martyn's daughter. Moreover, since in the present case Auld Robin was anything but old, and remarkably handsome and fascinating, that gentleman felt great confidence in his ability to cut out absent Jamie, even with the young lady herself. The game then being now, as Mr. Larpent conceived, in his own hands, he proceeded to play it. The winter moved on, but somehow he made no way. She liked him to come. She would talk to him kindly on general subjects by the hour. But she welcomed him—and he knew it—only for the lost one's sake; only because of the kindness and friendship which she believed him to have shown to her darling Frank. Silent ever on the one subject which filled her soul, little Rose lived on from day to day—she knew not how—a weak and colourless life, like that of a plant on which the sunlight never falls; battling from hour to hour with the horrid doubt of her lover—battling, and never yielding for a moment.

There is a poor little animal at the Zoological Gardens which endeavours to compensate for the loss of its liberty by indulging in the amusement of repeatedly turning head over heels at a particular spot in his limited run. Human animals, being deprived of their greater blessings, are wont to resort to expedients no less pitiful, in order to involve their stunted lives in some amount of illusion. To this end poor Rose now took to executing complicated patterns in tatting, learnt Czerny's "*Etudes de la Velocité*" all through, and began to copy an enormous engraving in pen-and-ink. But now a new and unlooked-for difficulty balked the passionate aspirant for her love. Her health began to fail. The star-like eyes grew preternaturally large and bright. The rosy-pink of her cheek, once pure and soft as that of the "islet" on chesnut blossoms, gave place to deep but changeful flames. She seldom sat up now; she oftenest lay upon her couch in weary, dreamy silence.

He saw the change. He knew that it was his own work, and he began to dread the Providence whom he had defied. By this time he had made known his passion to Mr. Martyn, and had received the old man's promise of future support. "By-and-bye," the sad father had said, "by-and-bye; when she is stronger I will urge her to accept your honourable and disinterested love." But of what benefit had that promise been? Of none. Larpent could not venture to approach the subject of his affection in addressing the suffering girl herself. The sight of her pale face closed his lips and paralysed his tongue. He dared not obtrude upon that wounded heart his selfish guilty love. He was a wonder to himself. He seemed to be under a spell—one from which he was powerless to get free. And daily he read more clearly than before upon the maiden's face the ugly word—death. "No," he said to himself, "she shall not die. Medicine and time shall give her to me yet." And now he heaped new benefits upon the old man and his sick daughter, and reaped harvests of implicit faith from the former—of gentle gratitude from the latter. He scoured the town to find dainties for the fickle appetite. He hunted up the notabilities of physic, and many learned fingers pressed in turn the girl's throbbing wrist. But all to no purpose. No M.D. could minister to the mind diseased. Rose grew worse. The couch was forsaken, and she took to her bed. In mingled anger and alarm at the Providence whom he could not resist, Larpent saw the object after which he had plotted torn from him by a process that no plotting could withstand. But despite his dismay and vexation, his devotion was still unremitted. He now discovered, and proceeded to provide for, a new necessity. Miss Martyn must have, he said, a regular professional nurse—one to watch and meet her wants incessantly. The confidential Bindweed was deputed to negotiate for such an attendant.

The deputy immediately set off for one of those institutions from which duly trained nurses may be hired. He easily found the place he sought. A large, dull house it was, in a quiet, old-fashioned corner of Bloomsbury. Was the matron in? Yes, answered a pair of firm-set feminine lips, while a pair of soft, but strangely bright eyes, scanned the person of the inquirer. Possibly, however, the required information might be given without application to the matron, who was much engaged? Mr. Bindweed explained that he had been sent by a gentleman named Larpent, of Bedford-row, to hire a nurse for a young lady named Martyn, of Guildford-street; and the woman who had admitted him now led the way to a small waiting-room, that she might there hear more fully the nature of the case.

The grasping little Bindweed was not wholly insensible to

female charms ; and the quiet, good-looking woman, with whom he now found himself *tête-à-tête*, temporarily drew his thoughts out of their ordinary course. Insensibly acted on by the attractions of this lady, and perhaps flattered by the rapt attention with which she listened to his observations, he grew more communicative than usual, and threw out mysterious hints as to the true cause of Rose Martyn's illness, which hints, in course of talk, grew into plain statements.

"I understand the case," said the nurse, at last ; "it must be one needing prompt attention. I am myself disengaged, and will shortly return with you to Guildford-street." She now left the room to arrange the matter with the matron of the establishment, and re-appeared in a quarter of an hour ready to accompany Bindweed.

"Caution ! caution !" said the little man to himself, as he walked beside her towards Guildford-street. But for once Mr. Bindweed's discretion was a little behindhand.

CHAPTER VI.

THE fogs of winter were lifted off London, and blue skies began to wear a spring-like smile. No improvement had taken place in the sick room. "Worse and worse," reported the doctors, gravely ; "no positive organic disease, but a gradual failing of nervous energy." Such was the *dictum* repeated in reply to each new inquiry. But Rose had found in the new nurse a true and tender friend. Never was attendant so watchful and devoted as this quiet bright-eyed woman ; and the more than professional gentleness which she displayed towards the invalid, soon reached the invalid's heart. Rose was not long in learning to love Mrs. Marshall as she loved scarcely any one else.

Somehow or other Mr. Larpent—continually hovering about the house, to the prejudice, one would think, of his client's interests—discovered the existence of this affection. He actually began to burn with jealousy towards the nurse, and to contemplate her dismissal. However, as he had never once come across her since she entered the house, it was impossible for him to find an excuse for sending her away ; accordingly he was compelled to submit to her presence and influence in the sick room with the best grace he could.

The consequences of Rose's regard for her nurse—whom the girl had quickly discovered to be superior to her present position—were important. The real causes of Rose's illness were gradually whispered into the sympathising woman's ears, and by degrees Mrs

Marshall learnt the whole of the sad history the events of which had brought her sinking charge into the melancholy position she now occupied. Upon this enlightenment Rose's destiny was turning, although she knew it not. Had it been, she sometimes asked herself, that Mrs. Marshall had invited and encouraged her confidences? She could not positively answer the question. At any rate, they had been imparted with willingness, and some solid relief seemed to accrue to the sad young heart, now that it had found an outlet for the expression of its grief and distress.

The quiet woman continued to do her appointed work with her usual patient tenderness. But as Rose did not fail to discover, there were strange evidences of subdued excitement in her manner; there was a growing eagerness and intensity in her eye; and the inward emotion thus betokened could scarcely be accounted for by anything included in the monotonous routine of the sick room. Depressed Mrs. Marshall might have been expected to be, but that she should be excited was puzzling. Sometimes waking suddenly from her troubled slumbers Rose would find her nurse in tears; her lips moving quickly as though she imagined herself to be engaged in some momentous conversation, or her fingers busy with writing-materials, which would quickly disappear as the invalid stirred and spoke.

But meanwhile the girl's life was hanging on a thread. Nobody had known the awful severity of Rose's heart sufferings; but every one could see that they were fast wearing out her sensitive physical organisation. But for Mrs. Marshall she would now assuredly have sunk. That strange woman, however, notwithstanding the unrest from which she herself appeared to suffer, had a curious way of injecting into the mind of the sick and broken-hearted maiden, drops of mysterious soothing and comfort. The tonic power of these hopeful thoughts helped the little one to bear up, and carried her through the crisis of her life's great sickness. Mrs. Marshall became more restless and impatient than ever. Once she had been mysteriously absent from the house for a full hour, when every one thought she was at her post. She seemed to listen with an agonised eagerness to every footfall that sounded upon the doorstep, to every knock and ring, to every voice in the hall below.

One April day, when the trees about the Foundling were budding into life, when the voices of the orphans seemed to express the hopes and promises of spring, when the golden light of a joyful morning sun was streaming in upon Rose's joyless face, there came a sudden short knock at the street-door. She had been dozing wearily, and dreaming (despite the external evidences of returning summer) that there would be "spring no more; that nature's

ancient power was lost.” The moment the knock sounded, her dream was over, and she started up wide awake. Her eyes glowed with a sudden fire; and her beautiful face now emaciated into a deathlike thinness, might, as it became flooded for the moment with intense crimson, have recalled to a poetic mind, that lovely plant of Virginia which fades from beauty to beauty, and blushes as it dies.

But the parallel was soon to be at an end. Rose’s blush betokened no impending resolution; it told of new life. In an instant the nurse was at the girl’s side.

“Miss Rose, darling,” she said, “try to be perfectly calm for a little while. Your ears have told you the truth. Mr. Thoroboye is here; and, believe me, trust me—he will never leave you again!”

The astonished girl looked the nurse’s face through and through. In that face they read the astounding truth that somehow or other wonderful deliverance had come.

“Yes, my darling girl,” continued the nurse, bursting into tears, “we are going to try *my* prescription, now that every other has failed. Don’t be frightened or surprised dear, any longer. My coming to you has been ordered by Providence, and He through me, has brought about that which will cure you! My love, my innocent injured darling, *I* have caused your sickness—will you ever forgive me? And now *I* must heal you. Thank Heaven, it is in my power to do so! Yes, it is true indeed that I have wronged you—wronged you more deeply than you dream; but my prayer is heard at last, and I am permitted to repair this grievous wrong. Look at my face, and see whether I am about to deceive you. Watch it: can you simply trust the assurance I am going to give?”

Rose looked into the eyes which were beaming with truth and happy relief, and quelling the rising question as to what Mrs. Marshall could possibly have to do with her sad history, she brightened into her old happy self and said—“I trust you entirely; whatever you say I will believe and rest upon.”

“Then I tell you,” said Mrs. Marshall, “that Frank Thoroboye is yours again,—undoubtedly and for ever yours—from this day forward. I must now go to him, and he will soon tell you so himself.”

Rose leant her head back upon her pillow; she could not speak, but she did believe. Her intellect remained unsatisfied; but her heart was full of a wondrous faith whose very strength was the assurance of fruition.

Mrs. Marshall left the room. As she did so, a servant met her and told her that she was wanted in the parlour below. Heaven knows what an effort it cost her to obey the summons! Heaven knows how much cause she had to shrink from the coming inter-

view! But her purpose was strong, for her errand was one of life and death for innocent little Rose. This consideration vanquished her reluctance, and urged her forward. Frank Thorboye stood silent as she entered. When his eye fell upon her, his olive-tinted face paled into a death-like hue, and his powerful frame shook like an aspen in an autumnal tempest. Before him was the woman whom he had once called his wife! She never raised her eyes. She crossed the room to where he stood, and then bursting into tears, fell at his feet, "making her face a darkness" from him, as Guinevere once made hers a darkness from the king. "Oh!" she cried, passionately, "can you ever, ever forgive me? What a miserable wretch—what a guilty wretch I am!"

This conduct immediately produced a change in Mr. Frank Thorboye's demeanour. He instantly shook off his agitation and horror, and taking the weeping woman by both hands, he said with characteristic energy—"Now my dear, good creature, my poor Arabella—*don't*. Let me beg you to get up and be happy. So *you* are the 'Mrs. Marshall who wrote to me at Paris, begging me for the love of Heaven to come here at once? *You* are the nurse who, with my help, can completely cure the darling invalid upstairs? I see it all. And now, Arabella, as I hope to be forgiven myself, I solemnly assure you that, from the bottom of my heart, I forgive you. Get up, there's a good girl! That's right (handing her to a chair); now we shall get on. I see by your face that your plans are not likely to fail, and that you have brought me here to-day on no disappointing errand. Yes, you did very wrong, poor thing! but now you are going to set everything straight. And, after all, that rascal Taylor was a thousand times more blameworthy than you. How truly you loved him! and he drove you to jealous desperation by his wicked neglect. He changed into a foolish adventuress the woman who might have been always his faithful, affectionate wife! If I could only get hold of him!"

"You would show him mercy I trust, for I love him still," answered the woman, calming herself. "Perhaps, too, he is not as inaccessible as you suppose."

Frank opened his eyes wide.

"Listen," continued Mrs. Taylor, "you know that I have deeply wronged and injured you; that under the influence of a morbid revenge which amounted almost to insanity, I, several years your senior, deceived your unsuspecting youth, took advantage of your impulsive nature, and made you the victim of a plot by which I intended to spite my faithless husband. You forgive me—and with that, perhaps, I should be content; and yet, if you can, and to what extent you are able, excuse as well as forgive. Remember the circumstances of my bringing up and early womanhood; that I

was left in infancy a friendless orphan, under guardians who cared not for me a straw; that at the ripe age of five-and-twenty I gave all the love of a heart which had never loved before, to a man who only feigned to love me that he might gain my fortune; that this man having secured to himself the greater portion of my property, utterly deserted me—and judge the ugly sequel—the story of my falsehoods, of my advent to Ruscombe, of my hiring the pretended chaperone, Mrs. Bewdley, of my design upon yourself—judge all in the light of my cruel antecedents. But enough of this. At the best, my crime is black—and but little, after all, can be said in extenuation of it; yet it is my duty now to tell you of scheming more disgraceful still, of deception even blacker than mine; and to show you that the schemer and deceiver in this yet darker plot is one whom you have loved and trusted far longer than you ever loved and trusted me."

Mrs. Taylor paused. Frank listened in silent astonishment.

"Yes," the woman proceeded, "I have summoned you here to-day, giving you the assurance that the bane of your mock marriage can be at once and for ever removed from your life. This is true. But first I must make to you a revelation which will fill your whole soul with astonishment and pain. Lucifer Larpent, your long-trusted friend, the man who has feigned to be your disinterested adviser in the great trouble of your life, has himself caused that trouble by means of a hideous and diabolical plot."

"I will not believe it," said Frank, in sudden fear that the woman before him was a lunatic.

"I will soon convince you," resumed Mrs. Taylor, "if you will listen. In the first place, *Lucifer Larpent is my own lawful husband*, the man who, under the assumed name of John Taylor, married me four years ago at the parish church of St. Leonard, Westhaven! You want proof of the identity? I am prepared with it. In a few minutes your old tutor, Mr. Andrew Strong, will be at this house, and he assures me that he is ready to state on oath whether Mr. Larpent is, or is not, the man to whom he married me. The circumstances of our wedding were peculiar, and the personal appearance of both my husband and myself were strangely impressed upon the vicar's memory. I have no misgiving as to what the nature of his testimony will be. Mr. Larpent is upstairs now, and Mr. Strong's recognition of him will soon show you that he is my husband indeed. So far, then, there is no flaw in my evidence, and you will find presently that I am able to produce written proof where it is required. It is right now that I should inform you of the motive which has urged Lucifer Larpent to the dreadful course he has followed. Of the nature of that motive I have not a doubt; of its power, his long and painstaking

deceptions are the best proof. A guilty love, then, for Rose Martyn, your own affianced bride, constitutes that motive. From my knowledge of the man, added to facts which I have gathered at different times from the dear girl upstairs, I have clearly made out the story. Your friendship with him, in the first instance, was manifestly fortuitous, or, as I should now say, providential. He must soon, however, have discovered your connection with me, and so soon as his passion for Miss Martyn arose, must have resolved to turn his knowledge to his own advantage. I am satisfied that he has cleverly prevented the evidence of his own marriage with me from being brought forward, and that to him alone you owe it that the certificate of the false union was produced, to the hindrance of your wedding with Rose Martyn.

“ I will now explain the circumstances which have enabled me to discover these facts. Not long after I parted from you my miseries brought upon me a dreadful illness—an attack of brain fever. This illness left me a different woman from the woman I had been when it found me. I was now quieted, broken, and subdued. By-and-by, a mighty remorse arose in my heart—a deep sense of the terrible wrong which I had done *you*. I passed a weary period of torturing self-reproach and useless regret. At length I could bear my condition no longer. In order to provide myself with an employment to wile away the dreary moments of my existence, I voluntarily placed myself under training, with a view to becoming a regular professional nurse. Meanwhile there grew within my heart, day by day, a stronger and stronger desire to right the wrong which I had committed. One day, when the guilt of that wrong oppressed me heavily, I begged of Heaven, in an agony of tears, that a way might speedily open for the fulfilment of my desire. I rose from my knees full of a strong and strange persuasion that my prayer would be answered. It *was* answered, and earlier than I could have hoped. That very afternoon there came a knock at the door of the institution to which I had become attached. By accident, I myself opened it, and before me I saw the parish clerk of Ruscombe. Was it not possible, I said to myself, that the opportunity I sought might arise through this man, whose appearance immediately brought again vividly before me the event which I would now have given worlds to undo? It was possible. The strange and strong persuasion again seized me, now shaping itself into a positive conviction that *my time was indeed come*. The clerk did not recognise me, and the story which he related to me—although I did not then properly understand it—brought me to the conclusion that I had better, if possible, contrive to come to this place myself. I arranged to do so, and came; and from the day of my arrival, I began to collect the facts of the extraordinary narra-

tive which I have now related to you. *Your name* soon reached my ears, and from the time I heard it I began to comprehend the entire history. I saw that the opportunity for which I had longed and prayed was at last actually before me. How could I better make compensation to you for the past than by restoring to you your darling Rose, and by making plain to you the fact that it was only a base and shameful conspiracy which had separated her from you? My love for the sweet girl herself, and my consciousness of having deeply injured *her*, as well as you, urged me to promptitude. I resolved to send a letter to Mr. Strong, imploring him to assist me. I obtained his address, and wrote to him. His answer was kind and satisfactory. He told me that he had fully intended to visit England during this spring, and that, under the circumstances which I mentioned—circumstances in which the happiness of his friend and former pupil were deeply involved—he would hasten his departure, and sail for this country forthwith. He is already in London, and will be here immediately, and I have summoned you so that you may be present when he arrives; perhaps, however, we had better go upstairs before he comes."

Can any writer be expected adequately to describe chaos? No words will tell the confusion of Frank's honest mind as he listened to the above astounding statement. But a beam, clear and joyous, broke even now through the murky disorder—the promise to that troubled breast of coming daylight, the token of approaching happiness and rest.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER CONVOY of the woman to whose marvellous history Frank Thorboye had just listened, that bewildered gentleman went upstairs towards the room where, as he was given to understand, the feeble, sorrow-stricken Mr. Martyn and the clever schemer, Larpent, were sitting *tête-à-tête*.

A bad time of it Frank had passed of late, a time as bad as any honest man was ever called on to endure. And he had not been without his temptations to terminate the life which had lost its zest and brightness. The ominous question, "to be, or not to be," had presented itself even to that elastic heart in its true original sense. But thanks to his sound teeth and perfect digestion, Frank had soon thrown aside the idea of suicide, and had battled pluckily with his hideous and humiliating disappointment as best he might. True, his effort to be himself had been as pitiful and melancholy as the effort of a crushed snail to gather up his poor spoilt physique into order, or as the attempt of a bee, disembowelled by some ugly

accident, to sail off, *minus* his inside, on a honey-gathering expedition. Yet the effort had been persistently made, and had, in a sense, sustained the man who made it. Under the influence of a new hope he felt almost more helpless than he had done before.

Arabella and he paused on the threshold of the room where Larpent and the old man were sitting. Each attempted to speak to the other. Each at first failed from emotion to articulate a word.

"Spare him," the woman was presently able to say; "you can well afford to spare him now. I have told you the full truth respecting him; I have given him the ugly titles he deserves; but in Heaven's name, deal leniently with him, for he is my husband—remember that."

Frank laid his trembling fingers upon the woman's trembling wrist. "One minute!" he said, "before we go in—one minute!"

There was a short pause, and then Frank gave the signal—"Now!"

As he spoke she opened the door. Larpent was sitting opposite. His eye was anxious, but his lips wore their ordinary smile. He was doing the agreeable, as usual, to Mr. Martyn, who, with an air of admiring pleasure, watched the handsome, fascinating man as he lounged and chatted with the easy grace peculiar to him, looking the model of good-breeding, the archetype of affability and of self-forgetful courtesy.

Frank caught a momentary glimpse of him under this aspect. Then he saw the crystalline brown eyes turn suddenly dim, and the lips lose their colour, and twitch with undignified independence. It was plain that the telegraphy of vision had revealed to Larpent the fact that his plotting was discovered. It was plain that he realised how providence had out-plotted him, and had made his manœuvring work its own failure, by sending to Guildford-street, *in furtherance of his wish*, the very woman whose appearance there was fatal to his designs!

Larpent now learnt for the first time that Rose's nurse was his own wife! His astonishment and horror at the discovery were plainly written on his craven face. Frank was not inclined to prolong the painful situation. Stalking across the room with a boy-like, impetuous gesture, he said—"Larpent, you have done me a shameful wrong. God help me to forgive you!"

Larpent stood up; drew back; forced to his face a semblance of his accustomed suave and amiable smile. A feeling of confidence flashed back into his heart as he remembered how satisfactorily he had disposed of all written evidence corroborative of the story which his wife was there to tell. Could he not even now easily persuade Mr. Martyn that this woman had been bribed by Thorboye to

propagate and personify an audacious falsehood? He could and would do it.

"What does this mean, pray?" he said with a quiet and gentlemanlike astonishment of manner. "Rather unwise, Mr. Thorboye, to come here under present circumstances, I think. And this nurse—for the nurse I presume by her dress it is—what has she to say, and what have you to do with her?"

Frank's blood poured through his body like liquid fire. He felt that there was one thing against which his temper was not proof—further deception. He was on the verge of proceeding to physical violence, when the pale woman beside him, secretly divining her wicked husband's tactics, placed a paper on the table. Frank opened and glanced at this document, and immediately recognised in it the proof of his freedom, which he had long vainly desired to obtain. It was the certificate of marriage of Thomas Taylor and Arabella Smithard. The government stamp, which it bore, proved it to be an authentic and legal document.

Larpen's eye quickly read the dreaded lines, and in an instant all colour fled from his face. He saw the truth. He saw that his trusted and highly-paid accomplice, Nicholas Bindweed, had played him false; that he had paid £60 to gain possession of a forged entry, while the real entry, intact and indisputable—of which the certificate now produced was a copy—was still extant against him! But a faint hope even now burnt in the breast of the ardent schemer. How was this infernal woman to show that Lucifer Larpen and John Taylor were identical? Her assertion was no proof that they were so.

So far Larpen had reasoned, when a step was heard on the stairs outside. A moment afterwards the door was opened, and the Rev. Andrew Strong announced. This gentleman advanced towards Frank Thorboye, and shook him heartily by the hand. Then gazing intently at Larpen for a few seconds, he addressed Mr. Martyn in these words:—

"I believe it is to you, sir, that the explanations should be offered which I have come to this house to give. I have been led to understand that my friend and late pupil, Frank Thorboye, has suffered under cruel misrepresentation. That misrepresentation I am able to clear up. I ask your attention to what I am about to say."

The old gentleman, too bewildered to speak, could nevertheless listen. This he seemed to do intently.

"Six years ago," began the provost, whose dignified and distinguished appearance was sufficient alone to insure faith in almost any tale that he might tell, "six years ago, when I was vicar of the parish of St. Leonard, Westhaven, I myself married to the lady be-

fore you—then Miss Arabella Smithard—the man who stands opposite me, the man whose real name, as I have lately learnt, is Lucifer Larpent, but who then assumed the title of John Taylor. This same lady, actuated by motives which I own I cannot fathom, having been cruelly forsaken by this Mr. Larpent, her lawful husband, passed herself off—only one year after her first marriage—upon Francis Thoroboye as a single woman. In his unsuspecting honesty he failed to detect the delusion, and married, or fancied that he married, the unhappy woman who practised it. The astounding and humiliating plot became known to my friend through my instrumentality. Having officiated at the first marriage, under circumstances which were likely specially to impress the ceremony and the persons taking part in it upon my recollection, I could not fail to discover, on visiting at Mr. Thoroboye's house, that the person whom he called his wife was the same who a year before had married Mr. Taylor. Upon my making this terrible revelation to Mr. Thoroboye, he and his mock wife immediately parted. My friend being a man of stainless honour and truth—I have a right to speak positively here, for I have known him from childhood—could not, of course, do otherwise than separate from her under such circumstances; but the grief and humiliation which this step caused him, few would believe. Since that distressing break-up of a home, which he had trusted would yield him pure and lasting happiness, he has, I fear, suffered repeatedly from the effects of the wicked wrong done him; and although, sir, I can scarcely justify his complete silence on the subject of his past trouble, when he made proposals to your daughter, yet I can readily understand and excuse—as I hope you henceforth will do—the feelings that produced that silence. I am here to-day to prove my friend's entire freedom to be your daughter's husband, and to show that Mr. Larpent cannot marry her without being guilty of bigamy. Frank Thoroboye is both morally and legally a bachelor. Lucifer Larpent is a married man; the evidence of his wedding, I see, lies upon the table; I am ready to declare upon oath that the man mentioned in that document is the man before me, and yonder stands his wife—the best witness of the truth of my story!"

At this point, a curious change in the position of affairs suddenly took place. Mr. Larpent, with a seraphic smile, which displayed in all the perfection of their beauty his ivory teeth, and in the most engaging and graceful manner conceivable, rose from the seat which he had recently resumed, and bowing to the whole company deliberately left the room. The move was a fortunate one. It confirmed more than anything else could have done the old gentleman's faith in the story which he had just heard. It was a tacit acknowledgment of the disappointed schemer's guilt. Google

And now full explanations were entered into. Time and reflection vanquished Mr. Martyn's bewilderment, and convinced him that Larpent had deceived him, and that Thoroboye had simply been victimised. He soon welcomed back to his affectionate regard the man against whom of late he had entertained none but feelings of anger and abhorrence; while Larpent, to whom he had recently given his implicit trust, fell suddenly and finally under his merciless displeasure and disgust.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALL this time little Rose had lain as still upon her bed as the white clouds of the calm spring day were lying on the blue of Heaven. Providence seemed to stand by her like a nurse, with uplifted finger, crying “hush!” to urge her to patient silent faith in Him till her deliverance should be fully displayed to her.

By-and-bye—for all she knew hours might first have elapsed—her door opened and closed, and Mrs. Marshall stood at her side. A strange sight was Mrs. Marshall's face, a sight to dream of but not to tell. There was brightness in it—but it was the sad and pallid brightness of the arc which spans a midnight sky.

“My love,” said the quiet woman to her patient little charge, “do you think you can dress?”

“To come and see him? Oh, directly.”

“You shall then. Stay! not too suddenly. There is no need for hurry. All is well at last.”

“Thank the great, good God,” said Rose; “I have never doubted him for an instant. The weary battle with the temptation to doubt him is what has been making me ill—that alone. I am well now. Yes, I will dress this moment.”

She rose, filled with new strength. The effort which she had not attempted to make for many days seemed no effort now. The tonic of her joy strung up her drooping frame, and made one—her purpose and her powers. The toilet was hasty but becoming indeed. She chose the colours he admired, and let her bright hair fall over her shoulders into any golden spray it pleased. Upheld by the mighty stimulant of her happiness, she forgot her frailty, and never dreamed how weak she was until she found herself falling in blissful unconsciousness upon his honest bosom, and felt his true heart rocking her into the strangest, most joyful sleep, that she had ever yet slept.

“Thank the great, good God!” were the first words she spoke to him upon reviving from her swoon. “I have never really doubted you, Frank; never for a single instant.”

And now followed such brilliant hours of joy as seldom shine

upon human hearts. Now gradually the whole truth was made clear to each mind that had been puzzled by the recent complications. And if the strange story, taught by strong examples, the ugly doctrine of human depravity, it showed as well that there are hearts beating amongst us which no plotting can reduce to falseness, that there are human affections which no fires from below can warp, no foul breathings of slander blow out.

Frank saw, and fully acknowledged his error—the error by which he had withheld from Rose and her father the history of his early folly and misfortune. But he had now fully expiated the short-sighted boyish blunder of suppressing the story, and, after all, there had been much to excuse, although nothing to justify its suppression.

It may be satisfactory to the reader to know that Mr. Bindweed, having embarked the ill-gotten gains of his transactions with Mr. Larpent in an enterprise which he considered to be as safe as the Funds, lost every farthing of them therein, and fretted over the loss during the whole remaining term of his natural life. Lucifer Larpent dies out of the story but wofully. His fascinating radiance, surely designed to answer some useful star-like purpose in life, drops into darkness with the undignified final explosion of a squib; glides bloodily into obscurity, like the fiery portent of the skies at which men shudder; or if it live, it lives only like the bleared ruddiness of a railway-signal, saying, danger. Lucifer Larpent died by his own hand. A double act of justice, however, somewhat mitigated the horror of his end. He committed to writing a full confession of his falsehoods, and addressed it to Rose's father; and he made a will by which he restored to his wife the entire property out of which he had cajoled her. Mrs. Larpent, however, did not long live to enjoy the benefit thus conferred upon her, nor had she lived, would she have been likely to enjoy it. Before her death her mind entirely gave way; and Frank learnt subsequently that the taint of insanity was inherited by her from her mother. Thus her daring and eccentric crime came to be remembered with pity, rather than with any harsher emotions.

Meanwhile, when gay summer had come; when the fields were sweet with the scent of lime-blossom, and musical with the songs of birds, Frank took his affianced bride and her happy old father down to Twickenham, to see the "place" which he had lately bought there. It was the very place wherein Mr. Martyn had spent his happiest days; wherein Rose had been born! He promised his child not to worry himself over his reduced and precarious income, but to come and live with her; there in the old loved home, where he would be surrounded by all the familiar sights and sounds of by-gone days, where he might make his aged life one long and calm enjoyment.

As the wedding-day approached, Rose (now as bright and well as ever) determined *this time* to make her marriage preparations in the strictest and most superstitious conformity with custom and fashion. In this determination Frank fully confirmed her. Stray cousins were to be hunted up to act as bride-maids; there were to be wreaths, veils, and favours. The bride herself must wear crystalline silk, honiton lace, and orange-blossoms; there should be no end of a breakfast, wines, speeches, pomps, and vanities. Above all, in the year of grace, 1865, there must and should be—no cards. Frank seized the old ones and tore them to atoms. The neglect of these usages and fashions of good omen and promise, had doubtless, he asserted, conjured up the ill figure of Nicholas Bindweed on the former occasion. This time everything should be strictly and minutely correct; and to ensure this the purse of the bridegroom was already to be considered as the purse of the bride. Whether or not it was owing to the efficacy of these wise precautions that no second catastrophe occurred, we will not undertake to say. Certain it is, however, that early in July, 1865, the following notice appeared in the *Times* newspaper:—

"On the 2nd instant, at St. George's, Hanover Square, by the Rev. Andrew Strong, D.D., Provost of Maudslayi College, Quebec, Francis, only son of the late Montagu Thoroboye, of Ruscombe Court, Somerset, to Rose, only daughter of Michael Martyn, Esq., of Twickenham.—No cards."

PICNICING ON THE MOURNE MOUNTAINS

Who are those that never can enjoy a mountain ramble, a stroll through the woods, a sail upon the waters, a visit to some grand demesne, unless a heterogeneous mass of strangers be gathered together, of people carefully got up in fashionable picnic costume for the occasion ; unless the male element in the shape of " nice young men " largely predominates, and the commissariat department be amply represented in the persons of at least a dozen little wretches, car-drivers, and attendants, all toiling up in the rear, panting beneath capacious-looking hampers, plethoric leathern bags, and distorted brown-paper parcels ?

We know there are plenty who would not thank you for the " mere beauty of the thing ; " who wonder in their secret souls what people see in purple mountains, and wooded glens, and picturesque towns, and broad blue waters, to go into heroics over, to romance and rave about, and cry " How beautiful ! " In their secret souls they can see nothing, and they do see nothing, neither do they believe that any other person does, only that it is a sort of fashionable humbug, wherewith people are combined to humbug each other, and make a practice of stretching out their hands and exclaiming over,—It must therefore be " the correct thing " to do it, and so they do it, but they do it incorrectly ; and any one turning to them for real sympathy or congeniality of feeling, will perceive at once that whilst their lips are uttering the stereotyped " How very beautiful ! " their hearts are inly wondering when they will have done with all this rubbish and nonsense, when they will have reached that nice little comfortable place at the top of the hill, under the trees or behind the rocks, where the hampers and the black bags and the brown-paper parcels are to be called upon to deliver up their savoury treasures, and where they can sit them down in comfort and enjoy a ham-sandwich, a slice of mutton, or a piece of chicken and a glass of ale, which would be far more enjoyable and to the purpose than looking at seas, and mountains, and valleys, and grand houses, and demesnes, that don't belong to them and never can ; and there they will sit and babble away with their own tiresome round of trivialities and small talk, which is a thousand times pleasanter and more agreeable to them, however, than keeping still, as some of the romantic creatures of the party insist on doing, that they may listen to the roar of waterfalls, the rush of streams, the songs of birds, and the stupid echoes of the hills.

Would we join such a party ? No ! we felt very much obliged,

but declined with thanks. But it was to be an awful jolly party ! Now, in our secret souls we disbelieved this. We had been to some of those "awful jolly parties," and, to adopt our friend's *parlance*, found them *awful dull* ! We found them for the most part composed of ill-assorted people ; of ill-matched pairs, and of individuals who thought themselves too good to speak to other individuals of the party ; of young men, who, through the accident of circumstance, were compelled to walk with young ladies for whom they did not care ; and of young ladies who pouted because their knights in waiting proved inattentive. Stupid or not, the ones they wished for, of husbands who had strayed away from their wives, and of wives who had been lost by their husbands, and could not be found ; of little girls who were always losing sight of their mammas, and crying to be restored to them ; and of papas who were always losing sight of little boys, who were *not* crying to be restored to them. Then there were young people there who had arrived at the years of discretion or *indiscretion*, as we think it should be written down, who wandered off into unknown paths and flowery wilds, among the bushes, with other young people of the opposite sex, and forgot to return, and kept the whole party waiting and watching for them, whistling shrilly through keys, and calling hoarsely through impromptu wind instruments formed by the application of the mouth to two closed hands, whilst those who did not join in the whistling and trumpeting performances, kept up an accompaniment of their own, of stamps, and growls, and impatient exclamations, to the effect that it was provoking—yes, exceedingly provoking ! and they sent out scouts who somehow went forth and grew wild in the woods, and for aught the main body could tell, were at that moment sitting amongst their new companions ; the feathered songsters of the grove whistling like blackbirds in the trees, or burrowing like foxes in the earth, or "hunting the wild duck and chasing the roe ;" at all events, the lost ones who had been sent out after the lost ones, failed to return.

Rivals came suddenly down upon green mossy banks by the river side, and there found other favoured rivals sitting in converse sweet, with fair but faithless ones, and there were dark looks given, and threatening aspects assumed, and the "state of affairs," as the newspapers say, grew alarming, and the young lady's eyes like the barometer in foul weather, indicated "much rain." Other young ladies again sat gloomily apart, and mused upon dresses which were "all a mistake"—not half so becoming as other dresses around them. The wearers of these becoming dresses again thought with vexation, how they had got them torn into ribbons among the rocks and brambles, felt there would be a row with mamma when they got home, wondered whether she would scold much, or if she would

soon get them a new 'one, and finally concluded that their day had cost them very dear indeed. All ended in dissatisfaction, in small accidents and offences. The time had been lost, not in looking after pictorial beauties, but in looking after each other, waiting on, or being waited for by small detachments from the main body, and, for most part, our "awful jolly parties" returned, yawning surreptitiously under cover of the evening in their carriages, heartily tired of the whole affair, and inly vowing it was stupid.

Such in general had been our experience of great picnics. Perhaps we have lighted upon evil days—we recollect once lighting upon a very wet one; but we will not cast a damp over the spirits of our reader now, as the dripping trees did over our persons on that occasion, by reverting to it. Suffice it to say, our noble half-hundred looked more like a band of water-rats, speeding through the long, wet, unmown grass of Chatsworth, than anything more doughty or gay. Perhaps great picnics do not suit us—some people say they enjoy them exceedingly. Sometimes we admit, through happy accident, they are great successes. Nevertheless our picnic of successively fifty, thirty, and twenty, were not successes; they were what a fashionable young man who composed one of the thirty, pronounced "a great boaw!" We since tried little parties of ten, eight, and six, and they were happy; everybody liked every other body who was present, everybody was intimate with every other body, and the little bands wandered off in pairs, agreed not to lose sight of each other, had pleasant two-handed chats, and the days were "filled with gladness," and the evenings found us returning in peace and satisfaction. Our mental barometer, as Charles Lamb hath it, "standing a few degrees above content."

Such was the happy termination to a long bright day in July, which we once spent on the mountain lands of Mourne.

Emerging from the tall wooded heights which rise directly over the picturesque village of Rostrevor, where the cool green shadows of the trees had protected us so pleasantly from the noon-day heat, we came out upon the second tier or course in our upward flight—the great broad plateaus of soft, elastic, mossy grass, upon whose thick surface the foot fell noiselessly; and the ploughshare of the plougher never came, nor the sickle of the reaper, nor the scythe of the mower, but here and there and everywhere peeped out the little mountain maids; the purple hair-bells and the blushing heath, the little white blooming mosses and the "wee modest crimson tippit flower," which Burns says he met in an evil hour; although we cannot think it was an evil hour when he "Maun crushed among the stour the tender stem," for the exquisite pathos and beauty of the lines in which he laments the daisy's fate, have for ever immortalised his "bonnie green." There, too, blossomed in gay

profusion the invariable furze, crowned with its golden flowers and soft green shoots, which look so mild and inoffensive at a distance, but are sharp and bristling as an angry porcupine on near approach. We often wonder at people who have no sympathy nor admiration, kindness nor toleration, for the friendly furze. Does it not light up our hedgerows with its golden bloom, and look fresh, and green, and pleasant, to the eye, at a season when all nature mourns, and other shrubs and trees shrink up and pale, and hide away under the earth from the cold bleak glance of winter? Call it coarse and common, plain and vulgar, as they will, and as we have heard some people call it, what other shrub, of flower, of pattern, and of colour similar would so universally harmonise with all positions, become all close proximities to other trees, and flowers, and shrubs, and bloom alike in hardy, cheerful, ever-verdant healthfulness, on mountain tops, in deep ravines, on banks and braes, abrupt declivities, and railway slopes, in rocky valleys, and in ditches?

Not in light esteem did the learned Linnæus hold the furze; for its bright yellow flowers were so much admired by him, that on first beholding them he fell upon his knees, enthusiastically lamenting that his own country, Sweden, was destitute of such an ornament, and envying England its possession. But even some silly English punster has gone and taken part against it, and tells us the reason why a donkey likes it is because he *is a donkey*. In this particular, however, we acknowledge, without shame, an affinity of tastes with our long-eared friend, nor think by doing so we deserve to be written down like Shakespeare's Dogberry, "an ass," or yet to be doomed henceforth to carry the auricular assanine appendages of Midas, the Phrygian king.

And now, having wound our way through the little forest of furze, bushes, and heath; over the moss-covered stones and the little rivulets, we arrive upon the broad grassy slopes of Cloughmore. Here wander in peaceful security what the man of chopping-block and steel down yonder calls, and truly, too, "the sweet mountain-mutton." Browsing in calm and contemplative mood, "far removed from the haunts of men," and unpleasant contact with angry dogs and hostile cattle, and all the other fusses and worries to which even bestial flesh is heir to, little do they think, poor things, that a dreadful day will come when a cut-throat wretch with a long, sharp knife, will steal up the mountain side, and pounce upon their hapless heads, and drag them down and kill them, and pull their soft wool coats from off them, and hang them in those finikin little shops far round the shore, that look no bigger to their elevated ken than rat holes; much less do they think that we fair, benignant, pleasant-looking beings, that come and wander through their mountain homes, or speak kindly to them as we pass, will yet

descend to other rat holes not far removed from that where dwells the cruel cut-throat wretch aforesaid, and gathering round white-covered tables set therein, will seize sharp knives and forks and eat them up! Banish the dreadful thought! Let them browse in calm content and sweet security, and believe that for us, even more than our dumb and unoffending friends, that line bears truth and wise philosophy, "Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise."

And now shall we sit down here, and turn and gaze upon the world below, upon the fair expanse of deep blue sea, upon whose white-capped waves the sun is dancing merrily, and the purple shadows from the far-off mountains come down and wrap its distant shores in mystic beauty, upon the little sails, the toys and playthings of the mighty deep, but the earnest care and serious business of the mariner; upon that brilliant patch-work of hill and dale, of golden corn, and purple vetch, and yellow hay, and grass of various hues, the pattern of which is all wrought out by a thousand peaceful workers, all waiting again upon the Great Master Worker who planned the vast design, to come and look kindly on the pattern they have wrought, to send His sweet influences of sun and rain, of light or shade, to deepen the colours and perfect the hues, and crown with ripe maturity their honest toil?

Nay, not yet! One long stretch more, and we shall reach the Stone, the crowning glory of Cloughmore—the Giant's Stone. And wherefore called "The Giant's Stone?" The mountain peasant and the boatmen there will tell you that in the far-off long ago the Giant of the Mourne range came forth and stood upon his lofty heights and called over angry words and fierce epithets at the rival giant of O'Meath. And the latter, rousing himself up in his angry night, grasped the huge stone and hurled it across the blue waters of the bay at his taunting foe. "And what a mighty throw!" cried we, incredulously, to the superstitious boatman who told us the tale in a low and cautious tone, as if it was a thing much too awful to be spoken of uncannily. But he shrugged his shoulders in evident disgust at our unromantic doubts, and with an imagination equal to Milton himself, when he saw the contending hosts of Heaven pull up tall trees and rocks and hurl them at each other, he thought "it might have been; who could tell?" Certainly not we, poor fellow, to his satisfaction or conviction. So we left him, and climbed on up to view ourselves the mighty stone which now must stand a mystery amongst the marvellous stone wonders of creation. Whether it ground the braggart giant to pieces, we know not; but sure we are that it might easily grind to powder a whole company of ordinary insignificant mortals like ourselves at once beneath its stupendous weight.

The Irish, with their ready wit and romantic imaginative turn, have in more recent years associated with it a far more genial power than that of stamping either giants or mortals into dust. They have invested it with the sweet charm of promoting love and uniting couples in connubial bands. All such as are weary of their bachelor or maiden state, and want to run the race of life in double harness, should, henceforth, make a pilgrimage to this Giant's Stone, on the verdant heights of Cloughmore, for the sweet reward of such exertion is to be that first up—first to reach the stone and kiss it—will be the first to wed of all the pilgrims of their company.

A jolly young priest, one of a party preceding ours, was the first to reach the mystic stone the day we mounted, and right heartily did he give it the salute which was to prove his speedy passport to the united state of matrimony. Of course he did it all for fun, and laughed merrily at his disappointed comrades. Who knows, however, but that away down in the lonely unoccupied recesses of his heart the young fellow may have felt natural but forbidden longings for the sweet companionship of another bride than the bride—the Church—for whose sake, according to the ascetic requirements of his faith, he had bound himself for ever and for evermore in solemn vows of celibacy?

Next came our party, and *we* of it were the first; but although not bound by any vows, either in the state of holy matrimony, nor yet against ever entering it, we somehow forgot to claim our privilege, our right being undisputed, and our point being fairly won. Our whole mind was taken up with the glory and beauty of the scene beneath. Our lungs were filled with the pure buoyant air of the mountains, free from all unhealthy exhalations and everlasting vapours. It sent the red blood tingling along our veins, and up into our cheeks in a healthful glow, and we felt buoyant, exhilarated, and ennobled as we stood there upon the everlasting hills, and caught a sublime conception of the power and majesty of the Great Architect, who in the beginning planned His vast design.

Rising directly above the stone on Cloughmore were the final peaks, lifting up their great brown heads in barren loneliness to the sky. Far away up, clinging like grasshoppers to their sides, were other pilgrims slowly crawling towards their summits. Would we follow, and, reaching the "highest point of all their greatness," get a little more stupendous view of the world beneath? Whilst in the solemn stillness of their lonely summits, should we listen, with altogether new and different sensations, for some faint echoes from the far-off dwellers on the earth? No; we had already stood upon the highest of all the peaks, and from an elevation of 2644 feet, looked from the towering summit of Slieve Douard, the King of the

Mourne Range, with one exception—that of one of the Magillicuddy rocks, the king of Irish mountains. What could we see more? What gain by toiling up heights inferior to his own? From Cloughmore termination at one side, and Slieve Douard on the other, we had now seen that whole range of coast and inland beauty which their superior height commanded. We were thoroughly satisfied—we were more : we were truly charmed ; we felt we had got our minds expanded as well as our chests. And now we prepared to descend, and bidding adieu to the Stone, with its legends of war and love, we came down. Down by the same winding paths, the pebbly streams, the moss-covered stones, and the sweet lone wildlings that grew, and bloomed, and shed their fragrance on the mountain air ; down by the forest of furze bushes ; down by the woodland paths, where the sunbeams peered through the leafy thickets, and tall trees stretched forth their arms to help us, and their gnarled roots made our steep path safe. Little birds came and twittered in the boughs above us, and flitted confidently from spray to spray, and trilled forth their glorious songs of cheerfulness. Blackbirds whistled and thrushes sang, and two grave and solemn rooks came and sat upon an old oak bough, as if to listen, and called down, “Ca—aw !” very much like the way in which their grave and solemn counterparts call out “Ha—aw !” over vocal performers in the drawing-room.

And now we were safely down, we looked about us like people who had been a long time gone, and thought it new and pleasant to be walking amongst our kind once more, listening to sublunary sounds, and looking again at sublunary sights. Presently we began to think about ourselves, to become conscious of our torn and tossed habiliments. Our near approach to elegantly got-up people—gentlemen and ladies strolling leisurely out to see and to be seen—at once reminded us of our disorderly appearance. We were walking now upon the coast road, where fishermen hung leisurely across the wall, and “gostered” with their friends, the car-boys, or hailed us from their boats upon the beach, where they were already beginning to heave and toss in the freshening tide. Visitants to the sea-side strolled in happy idleness underneath the trees, or sat them down upon the huge rocks and boulders, whilst children picked up shells and mosses according to their wont, and called delightedly at the foamy waves ; and tourists’ cars and fine carriages went gaily by, and costermongers screamed their wares to the rival chant of upright fishwives, poisoning their finny treasures on their scarlet-kerchiefed heads.

And now—oh ! common-place termination to mountain wanderings, grand ideas, and sublime conceptions—we were an hungred ! Our mean and wolfish foe came down upon us like an

armed man, and shook our hands until they trembled, and knocked our knees together, and enfeebled our limbs, and made our steps unsteady, clamouring so loudly and incessantly, and each moment more eagerly for his dues, that to appease him we were fain to turn aside and sit us down under a green and pleasant tree, from whence we dragged forth—not a plethoric hamper, indeed, but a very comfortable and excellent black bag, which had lain in ambush all this time, and in our absence, like its colour, kept discreetly *dark* about its whereabouts; and not until that bag had grown more lean than we are ashamed to speak of, was the hunger-god, whose appetite was sharpened on the mountain's top, appeased; and, quite sure at length that he was satisfied, we were again allowed to rise up and go upon our way.

Coming down to the rocky and wooded beach, we engaged a boat to take us back to Warrenpoint, and embarking soon found ourselves afloat upon the bubbling waves. Looking back at the pleasant row of villas along Rostrevor's crescent-shore, in one of which Dr. Chalmers with his family once resided—looking on, up over that beautiful interesting place—up over the tall woody cliffs through which we had recently scrambled—up over the broad grass lands—up—on—up—we barely descried the Giant Stone, hanging like a grey speck upon the mountain's side! And how small and insignificant he looked! whilst he, gazing down on us, thought us a very speck upon the waters—a tiny polypus in its boat of shell—a raft of insects—a feather from a wild bird's wing—a mere nothing, scarcely perceptible to his lofty ken.

Our boatmen were two in number, their respective positions being that of master and man. Had not the man volunteered this latter piece of information himself, we might not have discovered it, for there were no distinctive marks of superiority, either in the manner or habiliments of the “master,” to determine the greater responsibility of his station. Indeed, the man was rather the smartest of the two—certainly by far the most entertaining and loquacious; but in this respect they both behaved in the politest manner imaginable. We believe they regard it as part of their bargain—their bounden duty, in fact, and a thing quite to be expected, to entertain, to the best of their abilities, the *genteels* who patronise their boat. They assured the ladies, with tender gallantry, at every roll and wave of the great fresh sea, that there was not the slightest danger, never was and never could be, in their “jewel of a boat—their queen of the waters—their pride of them all. Shure if our 'onours would jist look round at the other cockle-shells, bobbin' up and down, and rowlin' and tossin', we'd soon be convinced it was the truth they were sayin'. Where was the boat of them all as went as steady as their boat, or kept herself as nate

or as trim? Where was the boat of them all as looked as brave or as beautiful? Would our 'onours jist look at her sides, how they glistened with green paint, fresh put on? Now, don't be unaisy, ma'm, it's dry, and won't daub ye! And look at her white rime—how it shows in the sun like the dancin' foam of the waves, or the white wings of a say-gull!" Who could help admiring their boat after all this? Certainly not we. We professed our entire approval of her green and white ornamentation; our willingness to believe she was the best on the water, and our happy assurance of safety; so we bounded over the freshening waves, and chatted—or, as they termed it, *discoarsed*—of various things; and as Barney Brady would say, "we tuck our noates."

The boatmen were not particularly notable for anything, however, save for a pair of remarkably sunburnt necks, which, with characteristic love of ease, and freedom of ventilation also, they left free and unconfined by all such land-lubberly inventions and effeminiacies as shirt-buttons and neckties. They were remarkable, also, for a pair of stereotyped grins—not angry grins, nor yet sinister, nor sycophant grins, but honest ones, contracted in laudable endeavours to look their great, round, flowing friend, the sun, in the face, and also in descrying boats, rocks, shoals, landing-places, and outward-bound vessels, through the dazzling light of the glittering waves.

The man, not the master, was remarkable for one thing more, so truly national, characteristic, and expressive, that we could not help remarking them, and we smile even yet at the recollection of the intensely arch, roguish, coaxing way in which he used his *eyes*. Can there be anything else in this world so versatile in expression, so deeply serious, highly comical, fierce, pathetic, gay, grave, fascinating, and insinuating in its quick alternations as the intensely grey Irish eye? We believe there is not; and we believe that those who have studied and are familiar with it will agree with us. This Rostre Vor boatman's was a perfect type, had they been but lighted up with the glory and intelligence of a refined intellect and cultivated wit. But when we speak of grey eyes, we pray our noble, blue-eyed Saxon friends, our grave English cousins, and our still more northern neighbours, the light blue-eyed Scotch, will not imagine that they must, of necessity, and quite as a matter of course, be of cat's-grey or goat's-grey, of the extremely unintellectual and unlovely shade, of which they can, "when found," like Captain Cuttle, "make a note."

In all true Irish grey eyes there is a strong admixture of that shade which Juliet's nurse declared she saw in the eyes of Romeo's rival, Paris—and that was green. Without it, we believe the eye we are describing is never perfect! Artists delight to give the soft

grey-hazel of the Irish eye. Novelists delight to give it too. So, also, does the moon, when she comes in her autumnal glory to lighten-in the footsteps of golden-haired September; when she casts over her a magnificent canopy of deep-blue, grey, and hazel shadows all in one, and we, looking into the soft, mysterious depths of that positively hazel atmosphere, with its bright, starry sparkles glimmering, twinkling, laughing in the mellow light, fancy there must be a perfect world of beauty and fascination beyond, could we but penetrate the shadowy, variable, intervening mists, and look within.

But, see; the moon has touched the waves, and night walks forth upon the mountain-sides, and drops her shadowy veil upon the bay. The little boats become obscure upon the darkening waves, tall ships loom up mysteriously in the gathering gloom, and hang out their little signal-lamps, to indicate to other ships their whereabouts; the faces of our companions grow shadowy and indistinct, and the roguish expression of the young boatman's eyes is lost in the general obscurity; his tongue still runs on, however, and is busy now with "master"—uttering their peculiar calls and signals as the boat nears their chosen landing-place, and her keel grinds along the pebbly shore.

Here we are, at home again! Yes, actually! and the houses which looked so small and insignificant from the mountain-summit have sprung once more into handsome villas and tall, commodious residences. There is ours, and we are very glad to see it. There is no denying it; we are tired, and shall be glad of tea and rest. And these people who throng the promenade, who looked no bigger than crows from our recent elevated point of observation, how nice, important, full-grown, and animated they now appear, walking and talking together in the moonlight, strolling together in picturesque groups to the shingly beach, or hanging in happy pairs from the wall which protects the Esplanade from the wild, strong, wintry tides!

For a while we stand upon our doorstep, watching the groups in the pleasant, mysterious light—watching the darkening hills, the illuminated sea, and loth to enter. At length we go inside, and close the door. To-morrow night we will come out, and mingle in this moonlight throng, the happiest of all the happy idlers. Now we are too weary; but we have still another little mountain to climb—we have to get upstairs. Oh, dear! how shall we ever do it? We wish we could sit down at the bottom, and stay there; or else find some one strong and willing enough to carry us to the top. But we have yet to crawl up somehow ourselves, and certainly these stairs are, to us, the last hair that broke the camel's back; they seem more wearisome than all our toiling up the

rugged mountain's side. At length we have attained the landing-place. With a sigh of relief, we lay our hand upon the lock of our own door, and smiling, and pleased, and happy—healthfully weary, to boot—we turn and bid our companions of the day, “Good night!”

EMERALD GREEN.

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SONNET AT MIDNIGHT

WHEN for a balmy clime, a bluer sky,
The swallow leaves our fog and autumn rain,
Should night o’ertake him on the stormy main,
He feels his little heart within him die.
So, passing from wild regions wherein fly
The gales of passion and the mists of sense—
Seeking the smile of your sweet influence,
The mild light of your spiritual eye.
Sometimes I almost faint upon my way,
When in the shadow of sad doubts I move;
Hearing your kindred in sharp accents say—
That I am quite unworthy of your love!
Come down, O morning light! upon the sea;
Gladden the swallow, and give hope to me!

R. F. HANNAY.

ABYSSINIA: MYTHICAL AND HISTORICAL

PART II.

THE Young Men's Christian Association has not monopolised the idea of making the best of both worlds : human nature is always producing some additional testimony in favour of the wise man's assertion that there is nothing new under the sun. We need marvel but little, therefore, that Romanists were in some sense anticipating Protestant brethren when they sought to combine the spiritual advantage of the Abyssinians with the temporal benefit of the Portuguese. These Ethiopian heretics might be in a bad way, but, according to the geography of the age, Prester John's country was not far from India, and India was on the high road to fortune. Accordingly, in the pageant of mediæval history, priest and soldiers march hand in hand, and alike priests and soldiers are Portuguese. There is often a kind of spring-time in national life, when, as it were, at the bidding of Vertumnus, the god of change and impulse, a small community bursts into a full career of activity and fame. Adopting a rustic simile, I would say that while other rookeries were clanging with disputes over sites and rights, the Portuguese crows, having nothing further to do on the parent trees, were taking flights a-field, and meeting with the proverbial luck of the early bird. It was Portugal whose mariners entered on a course of explorations and conquests, which, taken up successively by Spaniards, Hollanders, and English, led to the colonisation of a new continent, and endowed its children with a thirst for further adventure. Whatever might be the correct theory as to the local habitation and name of Prester John to the King of Portugal, John II., the Eastern potentate appeared to be a man worth knowing. In 1487, John despatched two stout-hearted adventurers, Peter de Covillan and Alphonso de Paiva, to discover Prester John's whereabouts, and open communications with him.

In 1520, Alvarez, a Jesuit missionary, found his compatriot settled down in Abyssinia, the husband of a native woman, a landed proprietor, and a man highly esteemed by the emperor. Those biographers who have touched on the fate of the Portuguese traveller betray a tendency to fine writing when describing the obstacles to his return. From the account given by Alvarez, it would seem that a great deal of their sympathy is misplaced.

Playing some such part as that of Joseph in the court of a foreign Pharaoh, it need excite no wonder if the fleshpots of his Egypt had a charm for the stranger. Alvarez speaks in terms of high eulogy of the character and attainments of Peter, who seems to have been a man of some, quaint humour. The good father received his confession, which he says had been intermitted for thirty-three years, and credits his penitent with the remark that the non-attendance of the latter at the confessional was owing to the fact that the Abyssinian priests were such blabs, being bound by no obligations to keep secret the disclosures made to them ; wherefore, continues Alvarez, Peter went to church and confessed to God. The confessor tacitly admits the force of the excuse, so let us hope that the layman's conscience was not overburdened by reason of his default. From the account of his wanderings given to Alvarez, it would seem that Covillan and Paiva journeyed together in safety to Cairo, and subsequently to Suaken and Aden, where they separated, making an appointment for a future meeting at Cairo. Paiva, who was a good Arabic scholar, undertook the exploration of Ethiopia, while Covillan pursued his investigations in India ; the principal object of their conjoint mission being, by securing the good offers of the unknown Christian potentate, to protect and extend the Portuguese trade in the East. Covillan visited Calicut and Goa, went homeward to Ormez on the Persian Gulf, acquired information respecting Madagascar (then more generally known as the Isle of St. Lawrence), and intending to keep his appointment with the compatriot, repaired to Cairo, *viâ* the Red Sea, and Zeila. At Cairo he heard of the death of Paiva (he does not speak of murder), and fell in with certain Jews, who brought him instructions from home : hereupon he retraced his steps to Zeila, not far from which town he found the Emperor of Abyssinia encamped. The latter received him kindly, and carrying kindness to excess, refused to part with him, whereupon Covillan settled in the country in the state of placid respectability in which his biographer found him. *Onme solum forti patria*: it is supposed that Covillan died in the land of his adoption—it would be interesting to learn his subsequent adventures, and the ultimate fate of the “sea card taken out of the general map of the world,” by which his companion and himself were (figuratively) to have directed their steps. Perhaps with so highly adventurous a monarch as King John II., a good sailor had cause to fear, lest, in leaving Ethiopia, he might have to go further and fare worse.

The interest taken by Catholic Christendom in the spiritual welfare of the few black sheep in the wilderness must be my excuse for introducing some remarks on the religious condition of Abyssinia. Discarding all early traditions as unreliable, we may safely attri-

bute the conversion of the Ethiopians to the labours of Frumentius, an Alexandrian priest, about the year 330. Frumentius was commissioned to the task by Athanasius, and was aided in his ministry by one *Ædesius*, who is known in Abyssinian history as *Sydrac*, while Frumentius figures as *Fremonat*, or *Abba Saloma*. Although the Church of Ethiopia adhered to the observance of certain Jewish rites not practised by the Western Catholics, nothing schismatical manifested itself in their doctrine until the holding of the Council of Chalcedon, in the year 451. At this council the dogma of Pope Leo, which has since become an article of faith of the Western Church (that in Christ Jesus there is but one Person, yet two distinct natures, not confounded or mixed), prevailed over the views held by at least a large minority of the patriarchs of the East. Eutyches, Archimandrite of Constantinople, was convicted of heresy in denying the existence of a perfectly human, as well as a perfectly divine nature in the Saviour of mankind; while Dioscorus, Patriarch of Alexandria, underwent censure, nominally for irregularities of life, but in reality for indulging in speculations more metaphysical than religious as to the definition of the term "nature" in divinity. The views of Dioscorus were warmly supported in Abyssinia, and the name of Leo execrated in proportion. The Abyssinians have frequently been treated as sharers of the Monophysite ideas of Eutyches; but Gregory, Ludolf's authority, was at great pains to explain that his countrymen repudiated the teachings of Eutyches, and admitted the union in Christ of perfect manhood as well as perfect Godhead, demurring only to the application of the term "nature" in each case, as setting up the existence of two great first principles. According to Gregory's explanation of the rites of the Abyssinian Church, the Communion was administered in both kinds, and two of the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church—Confirmation and Extreme Unction—were not recognised.

To the orthodox Catholic, many of the rites observed by the Abyssinian Christians must have appeared singularly irregular, and probably, by the most latitudinarian critics, divers points, alike of faith and morals, would be deemed worthy of severe censure. The Ethiopian Church had yet one hopeful feature—an intense hatred of the infidel; and considering the isolated condition of the country—cut off from direct intercourse with other Christian communities, and sorely beset by Pagan and Mahometan enemies—the wonder is, not that Abyssinia had an unlettered clergy or an heretical Church, but that it retained any knowledge of the Christian faith. Had the dominion established in Asia by Caled beena possessed of sufficient vitality to withstand the onslaught of its Moslem aggressors, the progress of the Saracen power would have been materially

checked. "If," says Gibbon, "a Christian power had been maintained in Arabia, Mahomet must have been crushed in his cradle, and Abyssinia would have prevented a revolution which has changed the civil and religious state of the world.

Whether advancing or retreating, the theology of spiritual Rome has this in common with the military policy of the Cæsars—it lost no opportunity of attack, and it was never more tenacious of a position than when that position was untenable. In proportion as the influence of the pontiff declined in the West did his emissaries cling to their acquisitions in the East; and to their pride in the youngest and weakest branch of their Church must be attributed the unbounded terms of satisfaction, not untinged by exaggeration, with which the progress of the faith in Abyssinia is spoken of. Protestants threw a degree of doubt over the authenticity of the documents attesting the reception by Abyssinian emperors of the Papal supremacy; the real question at issue is rather, I would suggest, the genuineness of their conversion. The Pope, who forbore to anathematise the Book of Common Prayer because there was nothing damnable therein, did not exact too much of his babes in the Christian faith; and of Gregory we read, that although in full communion with Catholic Christendom, he, even in Rome, received the sacrament after the manner of his country. Indeed, Father Bermudez, as we shall see, was consecrated bishop by a Coptic patriarch, and the pontiff had no hesitation in recognising the validity of the consecration.

Whatever may have been the extent of the success or failure which attended the efforts of the Church of Rome to include Abyssinia among the number of her dependencies, the zeal and self-sacrifice of her children demands our unqualified admiration. Natural causes, fever, and dysentery carried off many a devoted pioneer of the faith, and to the perils of the sea and the perils of the land were superadded, perils from false, or, at least, fanatical, brethren. Peter Heylin, a Protestant missionary of Lubeck, who prides himself on having conduced to the passing of the decree of expulsion against the Jesuits, relates that two friars, having subsequently persisted in an attempt to enter the country, were called upon to conform to the rites of the established Church. Refusing to receive the consecrated elements, after the Abyssinian rite, to bless Dioscorus and to execrate Pope Leo, they were hanged by their girdles and buried beneath a cairn of stones, piled over their bodies by a bloodthirsty mob. It is only due to the fanatics to record that they were actuated, not only by religious intolerance, but by a superstitious belief in an old prophecy, which foretold that the white men would take possession of their country.

The early part of the sixteenth century was a period of great

suffering to the Abyssinian people ; the Moors of the South, subjects of a Mahometan ruler, called the King of Adel, made unceasing inroads on the country, overran or annexed whole provinces, and led the inhabitants away captive. During twenty-five years, we read that one Mahudi, general of the forces of Adel, harried the Abyssinian dominions, penetrating at times far into the interior. In these straights, Helena, grandmother of the infant Negush, or emperor, sent to solicit aid of King Emmanuel, of Portugal. Her legate was one Matthew, an Abyssinian, with whom travelled a noble youth of Ethiopia, named Jacob. Matthew was the bearer of certain letters, the text of which has been carefully preserved by Catholic writers. One of these letters refers to a present, consigned to the care of Matthew—no less precious a relic than a portion of the true cross, stated to have been obtained from Jerusalem. The letter avers, that of the original portion acquired by the empress she had caused to be made two crosses, one of which still remained in her possession. She describes the one of which Matthew was the bearer as being black in colour, and hanging from a small silver ring.

On the return of the Abyssinian embassy, the legate was accompanied by Don Edward Galvao, envoy from the King of Portugal, his secretary, and suite. Galvao died before reaching Abyssinia, but the survivors reached Arkeeko, in the month of April, 1520. Alvarez, the secretary, has left a somewhat voluminous report of his impressions of Ethiopia, a report which has been received with some incredulity, as verging too far on the fabulous. But in such remarks as savour of exaggeration I detect rather credulity than mendacity on the part of the historian.

As if the unhappy country was not sufficiently desolated by the sword of the invader, it was, at the time of Alvarez's visit, ravaged by an extraordinary flight of locusts. Of the circumstances attending the allaying of this plague, the chronicler gives us an account most amusing from its *naïveté*. He took a quantity of these locusts, and admonished his captives, in the names of themselves, and those who were absent, that they should trouble the party no more, and he then gave the locusts their liberty. We quote the sequel from the translation contained in "Purchas, his Pilgrims,"—"It pleased God to hear us sinners ; a violent tempest swept the troublesome insects away, and when the storm ceased, it was a terrible thing to behold the dead locusts, which we measured to be two fathoms high upon the banks of the river." We need not wonder at the fact that after this riddance Father Alvarez attained great celebrity as an exorcist. As a compensation for its liability to ravage by locusts, Alvarez tells us that the land contains turtles, which darken the air. "Herds of wild cattle," he goes on to

say, "break into the enclosures in the dominion of the Barnagas, and three sorts of partridges are to be found in the country, some the size of a capon." These are, evidently, the birds described by Bruce, as being "like a wild turkey, which ran exceedingly fast, and appeared in great flocks." It is a pity that, with a wonderful faculty of observation, Alvarez did not combine greater philological and archæological attainments. He visited Axum before its destruction by the Moors; but he says little more of its antiquities than "that there are many chairs covered with inscriptions, and many pillars that have letters on them, whose language no man can understand; but they are very well engraven. No man knoweth of what tongue these inscriptions be,"—a sufficiently *jejune* account, by comparison with the voluminous notice of the same inscriptions, given in the pages of Bruce and Salt. He speaks of having seen certain caves—probably those at Calam Nagus (King Calam, or Caled, whose title, Hellestheus, is, by the way, stated by Bruce to have been merely a prefix, signifying "blessed"), and gives, without comment, a tradition that they had been the repositories of the treasure of Queen Candace. We suspect exaggeration in some of the figures given us by the simple-minded chronicler, as, for instance, in the number of communicants attending one day's celebration of the Eucharist in a church at Angolo—no less than 20,000, all recipients of the elements; none others, says Poncet, remaining in the churches at the time of celebration. Alvarez, indeed, states that the elements were administered during the whole day in three porches of the church.

Of the mountain of Amhara, the alleged place of confinement of the Imperial princes, he vouchsafes the following description:—"The aforesaid valley," (not given with any great minuteness, but easily developed on the accompanying map,) "reaches unto a most high mountain, where the sons of the Prester John are continually kept as it were in prison, and they have recorded in their old books that in the days of a king of Ethiopia, called Abraham, it was revealed unto him one night in a dream that, if he desired to keep his realm in quiet and obedience, he should shut up his sons (which were many) in a mountain, and suffer none of them to come abroad, saving him which he would have to be his successor, and that this order should always be observed as a thing which came from God; otherwise, Ethiopia being large, some part thereof would fall to insurrection, and would be disobedient unto the heir, or perchance would kill him." The king standing doubtful concerning his revelation, where such a mountain should be found, it was again revealed unto him that he should send to search out all the country till he should find out a place where he should find grets upon the crags and cliffs of rock so high that it should seem they should fall

down, and that in this place he should shut them up; which being done, this mountain was found out, which is so large that a man must spend many days in compassing the foot thereof." Hamlet is not of more importance in the play of that name than is this rock of Amhara in Abyssinian mythology. It crops up in places where it might be least expected, and each succeeding writer contributes a touch of his own. Bermudez, to whose observations on Ethiopia I shall presently refer, adds one or two features of interest, omitted by Alvarez. The account given by the former is as follows:—"The custom is that all the male children of the king, except the heir, as soon as they are brought up, they send them presently to a very great rock which stands in the province of Amhara, and there they pass all their life, and never come out from thence except the king which reigneth departeth this life without heirs, for then they bring from the rock him that is nearest to come and reign, the which *neither bringeth wife nor children from thence if he hath any there; but they remain upon the rock, and he marrieth in the kingdom with another wife.*" Alvarez, who gives a very minute account of the police arrangements of the rock and in particular of the punishment inflicted on one poor wretch who endeavoured to escape, fails to record the circumstance to which I have sought to draw particular attention; and, indeed, the sequel of his topographical description leaves us in doubt as to whether the rock was in fact situate in the kingdom of Amhara. "In this part," he goes on to say, "where our road lay we travelled almost ten days and then left it, which reacheth unto the kingdom of Amhara and Bagamedri." Goez (contemporary with Alvarez), in his apparently very accurate account of the state of the empire, ignores the custom of keeping any of the princes in seclusion; he speaks of the education of the heir apparent as being conducted in the royal Court (*aula regia*), and that of the other sons as being entrusted either to rulers of provinces or other eminent personages of the realm. In opposition to this testimony Ludolf quotes from Tellez, who wrote about the year 1660 a reference to two mountains, Geshen and Amhael, as being the prisons of the blood royal, maintained as a state institution for 230 years, and abandoned in the year 1590, under circumstances thus simply related:—"On King Nahod being called to the throne he had a son about nine years of age, of whom, in the presence of his father, a courtier made the profoundly original remark—'Certainly, the lad grows apace.' 'Oh, father,' said the ingenuous child, 'have I grown thus fast, when buried from your sight in the rock Goshen?' The pleadings of infancy prevailed over the prejudices of antiquity, and the barbarous custom was abolished." Ludolf, however, does not quote with perfect accuracy. Tellez, in relating this episode in the lives of King

Nahod and his son, Anac Segued, speaks of the custom as having existed two hundred and odd (*tantos*) years. The circumstance which led to the adoption of this system of seclusion he describes as follows:—Ikhunum Anulac, ruler of the country about the year 1270, having, according to one authority, five, and according to another, ten sons, gave them a dying injunction to live peaceably amongst each other and to govern the realm alternately. The ambition of these princes led to constant strife and insurrection. The least scrupulous of the brothers hit upon a plan of removing competitors by seizing and confining the other rulers. Unhappily for the success of the scheme, his ill-founded confidence in a seeming friend led to the betrayal of the plot to the reigning Emperor, who thought so well of the ingenuity manifested therein, that he committed the offender and all his brethren to close confinement. His posterity praising his prudence, imitated his example, and thenceforth the Rock Geshen became the place of durance vile for the possible successors to the throne of Abyssinia. So far from countenancing the notion that there were two state prisons, Tellez repudiates the term, Mountain of Amhara, and says that the name owes its origin to 'a blunder of Mercator, in his map of 1653. The draftsman, it would appear, confounded the mountain with the kingdom of Amhara. The proper name of the rock, Tellez says, is "Amba Guexen." Bruce's reference to the matter leaves us in greater doubt as to the locality of the mountain. In one place he speaks of Demo, in Tegre, as being the inaccessible mountain, wherein the children of the king were formerly kept, while in another he mentions Geshen, in Amhara, as being the place. He attributes the cessation of the custom to the fact that experience proved that the steepness of the mountain did not render it proof against internal treachery. The rock being betrayed to the Moors in 1540, by a faithless female servant, its inmates were put to the sword, and it was thenceforth judged more consistent with the welfare of the state that its princes should go at large, rather than run the risk of being murdered. According to Bruce's chronology, King Nahod reigned from 1495 to 1508: so that it is impossible to find any circumstances in common between his relation and that of Tellez. Dapper describes the kingdom of Amhara as being situate between the tenth and twelfth degrees of northern latitude, and quotes Sanut as his authority for assigning as its northern boundary a certain lake, wherein is the island of St. Stephen, with the mountain Amhara, where are kept the princes of the blood royal (*princes heritiers*) of the kingdom of Abyssinia. A memorandum in Latin, on the map bound up with his geography, fixes the mountain, with the most suspicious exactitude, on the Equatorial line.

Bruce translated the word *Geshen* "grassy;" but a reference to the vocabulary given by Ludolf might induce a philologist to ally it with the word "Lord." Considering how prone the Abyssinians have ever been to receive and promulgate myths, and how much their knowledge of the sacred writings is obscured by legends, I am inclined to think that Alvarez was not far from the truth when he associated the living sacrifice of princes with the name of Abraham; but I imagine that the real Abraham was the Father of the faithful; the Amhara of the myth the Moriah of Scripture; and that the whole legend of the rock was a corruption of the biblical account of Abraham's offering. The term "Amhara," as applied to a particular mountain, would appear to have no distinctive meaning: the root is probably Amba, a rocky fastness, which gives its name to the kingdom of Amhara.

Returning from this lengthened digression, I revert to the records of the Jesuit missionaries, and take up the adventures of Father Bermudez, as rendered by Purchas. This ecclesiastic evidently possessed indomitable energy, and no common skill in chronicling his impressions. He had formed part of the escort of Don Edward Galvao, had gained the favour of the emperor, and had, by the patriarch Mark (said to have been a man of weak character) been ordained and consecrated as his successor. He made one condition on his acceptance of the office (conferred on him in the year 1535), that his ordination should be recognised by the Pope; and to obtain this recognition, as well as to ensure the good offices of his countrymen in favour of the Abyssinians, he undertook a perilous journey to Europe. Successful in both objects, he landed at Massowah in the month of July, 1541, with a force of 650 Caliver men and Pioneers, commanded by Don Christopher Gama, a brave and chivalrous soldier, son of the celebrated Vasco de Gama. The campaign against the Moors is described by the patriarch with much precision, and with an entire absence of fine writing. About nine days' march from Baroah, or Debaroah, a sharp skirmish took place between the allied Portuguese and Abyssinians, and the invaders, who were under the command of Mohammed, surnamed Graigné, rendered "left-handed, or lame," also styled King, or Barnagas of Zeila. In this engagement both commanders were wounded. After another smart interchange of blows, in which the allies claimed the advantage, Don Christopher fell back upon a rock called the Jew's Mountain, of which he dispossessed the Moors, whom he put to the sword. Graigné sent off a spy, disguised as a pedlar, and bearing a stock of trinkets, to inform him of the resources of the Christians; but Bermudez, suspecting the snare, seized his pack and distributed his beads among the Christians, that their (the Moors') "mockage might redound

to the praise of God and the profit of His faithful." The king, Bermudez's protector, was dead, and his widow and son were with the army in the mountain. The patriarch had suggested a night-attack on the beleaguering Moors, as the best means of extricating the combined force; but the escape from the lines of the Christians of a stray horse brought on a premature engagement, in which many valuable lives were lost. Gama was again wounded—this time severely in the arm, and his standard was taken; the loss weighed heavily on the mind of the unfortunate commander, and it was in vain that the patriarch attempted to console him by the remark that the men were the true antient, and not the sign which they carried. The queen applied balm to the arm of the gallant soldier, and tore her veil to make a bandage; but the hurt to his honour admitted of no balm; he had better have been slain, he said, than have lost the king's standard. "One touch of nature makes the world akin." There is a melancholy degree of grandeur in the character of the virtuous Abyssinian woman, the queen's nurse, who, setting fire to the gunpowder, blew up herself, certain other women, and some fifteen or sixteen wounded men, who rashly, peradventure, preferred by this means to fall into the hands of God rather than into the hands of men.

An opportunity of effecting a retreat offering itself, the little expedition fell back, bearing the devoted commander on a litter. Thus encumbered, they forded two rivers; but, on preparing to cross a third, over which there was a drawbridge, the wounded officer declined to burthen his comrades further. Having been shriven, and provided with a supply of balm, Don Christopher, with his chamberlain, secretary, and three other Portuguese, retired to a neighbouring grove, to abide the will of Heaven. The party soon fell into the hands of the Moors, and, under duress, Gama penned a letter to his successor, commanding the return of the Portuguese forces. Bermudez called the attention of the queen and the officers of the expedition to two minute dots, or pricks, appended to the signature, from which he reasoned that the letter was written under coercion. Subsequently, in consequence of some hasty reflections on the creed of his captors, the unfortunate soldier was beheaded, and his mutilated remains were sent to Adel. Bermudez asserts, and the assertion is repeated by Lobo, that on the spot where Gama's head fell a fountain sprung up, which healed many blind folks. Subsequently, the fortune of war turned against the Moors, whose champion, Graigné, was shot by one Peter de Lyon; the King of Aden was also slain, and his forces defeated in a sanguinary engagement. After this defeat there was a temporary suspension of hostilities between Moors and Christians; but the latter, Coptic and Catholic, waged a fierce theological conflict

between themselves. The king leant to the old faith of his dominions, and charged the patriarch with being a believer in four gods, from his rejection of the Monophysite system. The Abyssinians becoming more and more estranged from the Portuguese as they ceased to have urgent need of their assistance, the king banished the Catholics "from that part of his dominions that he most frequented," and connived at the appointment of a Coptic Patriarch. Bermudez, however, unlike other missionaries of his faith, lived to regain Lisbon, in the year 1559. During the period of Bermudez's stay in Abyssinia, the unfortunate southern provinces underwent an invasion by the Gallas, who annexed dominions estimated to be as big as Castile, Portugal, and France. After chronicling these misfortunes, Bermudez proceeds to refresh his spirit by a trip into the realms of the marvellous, though his evidence is admitted to be hearsay.

"In the countries bordering on the Nile there is," he says, "a kind of unicorn, which is wild and fierce, fashioned like a horse, and of the bigness of an ass." He heard of the existence, near Damote, of a community of women living after the manner of the ancient Amazons of Scythia. "This race of Amazons were," he said, "regarded with favour because they were instituted by the Queen of Sheba, who went to see King Solomon." Our much-quoted map of Ethiopia encourages the belief in the existence of this singular community, by inscribing on the realm of the Cafates the following note:—"Hic Amazones habitare, dicuntur ut etiam in Regno Gavi et Zet."

"They say," Bermudez continues, "that here are certain mountains, very rough and desert; there liveth and breedeth the Phoenix, of which one alone is in the world, and it is one of the wonders of nature." Most amusing, by the way, is the energy with which Purchas, in a brief note, exposes the absurdity of this assertion, condemned as it is by the scriptural account of the preservation of species in the Ark. Nevertheless, saith Bermudez, the inhabitants of these countries affirm that this bird is there, and that they do see it, and know it, and that it is a great and fair bird; there be other fowl so big that they make a shadow like a cloud. Anent this cloud we are lost in the like mist to that which fell upon a Judge of Assize, when a Wiltshire witness persisted in defining a stone with which a savage assault was committed alternately as "a zizeable stoan," and "as big as a nub o' chäk." In keeping with those roc-like fowl are griffins said to be capable of carrying off a bullock in their claws: many other observations maketh Bermudez, respecting matters which I purpose to speak of elsewhere. In succession to Bermudez, John Nunez Baretus was dispatched to Abyssinia, but he died at Goa before reaching the appointed sphere

of his labours. Father Oviedo, in 1557, passed into Ethiopia from Goa, reaching Massowah but a very short time before its capture by the Turkish admiral. Oviedo died in 1577, and was buried at Fremona, where was the chief church of the Portuguese. Other authorities mentioned by Purchas are John Gabriel, Captain General of the Portuguese in 1603, and Antonio Fernandez, an Armenian, who wrote a little later. This General, as we have seen, added to the zoological knowledge of the period, by giving an account of the unicorn. According to him, Abyssinia was divided into twenty-six kingdoms, distributed into fourteen regions. Over some of these the rule of the emperor must have been fairly nominal, as, for instance, Accaguorle (described as abutting on Adel), of which the chief city is described as Zeila, some time Avalites (Havilah), a singular confirmation of the remark of Benjamin of Tudela, before noticed. This same Zeila had been destroyed in 1517, by Soarez, the Portuguese Governor of Goa, at the time that its Moorish king was engaged in the invasion of Abyssinia.

PART III.

THE condition of Abyssinia at the commencement of the seventeenth century would appear to have been most deplorable. No aid could be relied on from the European nations in the campaign against the infidel, and, indeed, the successes of the Turkish Navy had cut off all maritime communication with Europe. The exact date of the acquisition by the Turks of the sea-ports of Abyssinia is a period of some little doubt, but it is agreed that during the long reign of Solomon the Magnificent, the approaches to the sea were either wrested from the Barnagas, or treacherously surrendered by him. Of the interior of the country, Paez writes in 1609 that every man lived in arms, nor was the emperor's life more quiet than that of other men. Earlier writers have given us an account of the state of education among the Ethiopians by no means flattering, Goetz in particular explaining that the Empress Helena's mission to Europe was undertaken by an Armenian, because of the inability of the natives of the country to speak Arabic or Persian, but the insight we get into the domestic condition of the inhabitants at a little later period, is at once more minute and more suggestive of decadence. Fernandez, in 1606, writes thus : "They (the Abyssinians) have no great cities, but villages, unwallled and unfortified ; their greatest town hath scarcely 1600 houses ; their houses are small, without elegance, without story, almost without art ; round, and covered with earth and straw." Although the country is represented as possessing extraordinary aptitude for the growth of the grape, Paez relates in more than one instance,

the necessity he was under of celebrating a dry mass from lack of wine. The desolation occasioned by locusts once more occupies the attention of historians. Paez has a very amusing note on the subject ; he records his success in freeing the Catholics from the pest "by litanies, and sprinkling the fields with holy water, whereas the fields of heretics, separated only by a ditch, were spoiled by them, for a heretic using the same sprinkling, preserved his corn, which to a Catholic neglecting, in one field was lost, and preserved in another, by that aspersion." He scarcely recognises the unimpeachable orthodoxy of the locusts, concluding as he does with the remark, so near of kin are locusts to the devil, that they cannot abide holy water.

Paez, to the zeal of his predecessors, added something of the finish and grace of a scholar. He translated the Catechism into Ghiz, the classical tongue, and attained considerable distinction by his skill as an architect. "He built a palace for the king, in a place called Gorgora, being a kind of peninsula almost surrounded by the Tzanic lake, where the king took up his winter quarters" (Ludolf.) On the occasion of his celebrating mass before the king that the latter might judge of the difference between the Coptic and the Catholic manner of celebration, we read that the king caused a *great tent* to be erected for the purpose. Paez seems to have been very successful in his ministry, and his death resulted from his zealous, and indeed fanatical, pursuit of his sacred calling, a brain fever carrying him off on the 3rd of May, 1623. In the list given by Tellez of the Jesuit Fathers, I find the name of Gaspar Paez, but I am unable to trace the relationship (if any) existing between the two namesakes.

The statement of the palace that he built is nearly as interesting as the record of the undoubted might of the good priest. Strange as it may seem to our notions, all history concurs in establishing the fact that from the time of the sacking of Axum to the date of the erection of this palace, the rulers of Abyssinia were essentially "plain men, dwelling in tents." Notwithstanding a statement made by Goez that there were many towns and villages in Abyssinia, it would seem that the camp of the emperor was, until the time of Paez, the seat of the government, and that the camp was pitched hither and thither, according to the ability of the Abyssinians to resist invasion, or the necessity they were under of retiring before it. Gregory, Ludolf's informant, is precise on the point that "after the kings of Abyssinia left Axum, they never had any constant manors nor palaces, but contented themselves to live in tents." Alvarez gives a very perspicuous account of the system of castrametation observed, and adds, as implicitly as subsequently did Gregory, that "Prester John has no fixed residence, but goes

about here and there, lodging in his own tents, which amount to six thousand." Our mendacious friend Baratti gives, as an authority on the point, an ordinance of a long deceased king, "that for the security of the state, the Ethiopian emperor should never spend above six days in a walled town, but should live in the open field." The fact that the imperial tents were pitched in Shoa at the time of Peter de Covillan's arrival in the country has given rise to the belief that a permanent seat of government was there established. Nevertheless it would seem that in time of tranquillity, and when the seasons did not admit of the conduct of military operations, the kingdoms of Dembea or Amhara were the favoured haunts of royalty. Bermudez, who accompanied the monarch in an expedition against the Gallas, speaks of his intention to return towards the provinces of Semen and Amhara, "where the kings and emperors of the country do make their abode and continuance, because these countries are better than the others, and because they the (kings and emperors) are born and natural from thence." Dancas, or Dangas, is occasionally mentioned as the scene of the royal encampment, and from the juxta-position of this place with Gondar in Ludolf's map, engraved under his direction by his son, I was at first led to believe in the identity of the two places. Daneas is indicated by a note in the following terms, *ubi olim castra regia*. Apparently in continuation of this remark, "Guendar" is rendered in different type, whereby I judged that the Ethiopian title embodied the Latin remark, and that the Abyssinian capital was named on the same principle as our Chester. A more minute inspection of the map, however, has convinced me that Guendar refers to a totally different place, and an extract from Ludolf's letter-press, contained in a few lines below, will show that he by no means intended to convey the impression I have referred to. In all the old writers we find allusion frequently made to the existence in many places of a "Betenegas"—literally "place or palace of the king." The word, however, need not conjure up any associations with regal magnificence, for the buildings, as described by Alvarez, were merely one storied courts, formed of mud and thatched with straw. Dapper mentions the existence of a Betenegas at Angeba, in Tigré, wherein no person might dwell save the viceroy, but by his use of the latter term it would appear that the restriction was peculiar to that place. The similarity of the word "*Bete*" to the Hebrew "*Beth*" is remarkable. According to Poncet, churches were in his day denominated *Beith Christian*, or Houses of Christ.

I am aware that in stating my views of the transitory nature of the royal occupation of any particular spot I am running somewhat counter to the general belief, and by no one contrary assertion was I more awed than by that contained in one of the letters of Dr.

Beke, published in the 14th volume of the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society. Dr. Beke speaks of Waj as having been the capital of the Empress Helena, and of the Emperors of Abyssinia, until they removed to Gondar. I cannot find any mention of the town of Waj in any of the earlier histories of Ethiopia, and, unless that name can be identified with that of either of the places mentioned in the following extract from Ludolf, it would seem that his authority is decidedly opposed to the claims of Waj to have been the ancient seat of the empire. Of old, before the Gallans conquered it, the camp was pitched in Shewa, a fertile and most beautiful country, but for the most part in December, and that for three or four years together in one place. In the year 1607 they pitched at Coga: they removed to Gorgora in the year 1612; from thence to Dancaza, and lastly to Guendar, which place Bernier, because, perhaps, he had heard it was the residence of the kings, called the metropolis of Ethiopia, of which, perhaps, in a few years there will be nothing to be seen." If our chronicler's accuracy as to past events were as unsound as his anticipations of the future, our confidence in him would not be great. In Poncet's time, Gondar had waxed a place of much importance. He writes the name in its entirety as "Gondar à Catma," which he translates the "Town of the Seal."

A pleasing narrator of a sojourn in Ethiopia, shortly after the death of Paéz, is Father Jerome Lobo, whose history reaches us in English, thanks to a translation made by Dr. Johnson. Lobo, though stout of heart, seems to have been a bit of a grumbler; but his comments on his adventures are none the less on that account suited to the taste of an English reader. Bruce expresses himself unable to comprehend how the good missionary could have taken the course he did to reach Axum; but the critic's wonder would have ceased had he paid more attention to the text of Lobo's history. Setting out from Goa, he contemplated penetrating into Abyssinia from the extreme south; but after making one abortive attempt to reach Axum from Diou, he took ship again in quest of the port of Baylur, which, although it stands out in bold type on Ludolf's map, was, in Lobo's time, so little known "that the pilots who had made so many voyages in the Red Sea could give us no account of it." For the benefit of succeeding travellers he describes it as being distant forty leagues from Delacha, and twelve leagues from Babel Mandeb. Hugging the shore as closely as might be for fear of observation and capture by the Turks, the vessel which carried the good father and his fortunes ultimately doubled a piece of land which came out a great way into the sea, and the travellers found themselves in the middle of a fair, large bay, which they considered, and happily with reason, was Baylur. It would appear that on leaving Goa, Lobo entertained

the conviction that he would be landed at the port of Axum. Father Lobo seems to have experienced a fair share of the perils which beset St. Paul; including a peril from serpents, which the great apostle of the Gentiles has not thought fit particularly to refer to. "In Tegré," he says, "as I lay on the ground I was seized with a pain which caused me to rise, and saw about four yards from me one of those serpents which dart their poison from a distance. Although I rose before he came very near me, I yet felt the effects of his poisonous breath, and if I had lain a little longer had certainly died. I had recourse to Bezoar, a sovereign remedy against this poison, which I always carried about me. These serpents are not big, but have a body short and thick, speckled with brown, black, and yellow; they have a wide mouth, with which they draw in a great quantity of air, and having retained it some time, they eject it with such force that they kill at four yards distance." Less fortunate was our traveller in escaping from another serpent, which inflicted on him a sting against which the unicorn's horn was of no avail. In this extremity, like a good Christian, Lobo committed himself to God and prepared for death. However, his time was not then come, and he lived to survive other misadventures; in particular a violent attack of illness resulting from his incautiously eating a fruit resembling an apricot (peel and all), the rind of which had very deleterious properties. Difficult as it was for the traveller to reach Abyssinia, it was a task of greater difficulty for him to get away. At the time of the expulsion of the Jesuits he, with his fellows, were sold to the Turks, and had to find a goodly ransom. With heroic courage he offered to remain as hostage for the payment of the balance of the money, in order that an aged brother might be liberated; but his offer was rejected, and Lobo happily reached home and set about collecting funds for another attempt at overcoming the obstinate repugnance of the Abyssinians to the tenets of the Catholic church. He has a parting fling at the priests of the dominant rite in these words:—

"No country in the world is so full of churchmen, monasteries, and ecclesiastics, as Abyssinia. It is not possible to sing in one church or monastery without being heard by another and perhaps by several. Their instruments of music made use of in their rites of worship are little drums, which they hang about their necks and beat with both their hands. These are carried even by their chief men, and by the gravest of their ecclesiastics." If the vocal powers of the Abyssinian clergy were as Barretti described them, captivity among the infidels would be preferable to a residence in such a country. Lobo evidently had music in his soul, and his soul was vexed accordingly.

With all the zeal and self-sacrifice of its votaries, the Roman

establishment was essentially a missionary church in Abyssinia. The Emperor Socinios was undoubtedly a devoted adherent to the doctrines of the Catholic faith, but he survived Paez only nine years, and his successor had neither the will nor the power to withstand the strongly expressed determination of his people. So long as the friar was the companion of the soldier, he was welcomed; alone, he was barely tolerated; and the insolence of the Portuguese party added to the ill-will with which he was regarded. With sad hearts the Catholic priests dismantled the temples they had reared and preserved with such devotion; and in the year 1634 a band of prisoners in the hands of the Turks represented the once triumphant hierarchy of Ethiopia. The imperial mandate and the protest of the Patriarch Mendez—a protest said to have been written at a later date than is attached to it, and from a more secure place than Massowah—are they not written in the chronicles of Tellez?

After wading through the earlier authorities, it is a great relief to arrive at the observations of a man like Ludolf, who could look at the history of a distant country with no more prepossession or bias than a slight suspicion of the accuracy of Jesuits. Ludolf had one great advantage over many other historians in that he enjoyed a personal intimacy with a well-informed native of the country—the Abbas Gregory. The title of the Ethiopian is not a little puzzling, but it appears that, without the sanction of any bishop or university, Gregory assumed the title of Abbas by consent of his countrymen, and in right of his superior learning. Gregory, born at Melana Cenace, in Amhara, and educated by the Jesuit priests, displayed all the elements of a good Churchman; and, on the banishment of his patrons, had elected to follow them, being allowed, by the prudent tolerance of the Roman authorities, to retain a leaning to the Coptic ritual while admitting the supremacy of the pontiff. In Europe he took pains to impress on the minds of his acquaintance that he was no man of the people, but “of the Amharican house and lineage of nobles, who are governors of the Ethiopian house, who command and rule in the name of the king.” Gregory was staying at Rome in the year 1649, when Ludolf, who was at that time librarian to the Duke of Gotha, wrote to invite him to Erfurt, the residence of his mother. Writing in Ethiopian characters, it would seem that the librarian was not so distinct in his penmanship as he might have been; and Gregory, after inquiring in vain for “*Erfahrt*”—the reading he put on the language of the letter—abandoned the idea of availing himself of the invitation. Circumstances, however, subsequently admitted of his making Ludolf’s acquaintance at Heldburg, the residence of the duke. Apparently by way of consoling himself for the censure

passed upon his penmanship, Ludolf chronicles two other instances of error in the spelling of Erfurt, the one on the part of an Abyssinian, the other on that of an Englishman—Bishop Walton. Who-soever would make an essay at Ethiopian without a master may study Ludolf, possibly with advantage. The most attractive feature in the good German's genius is, to my thinking, his love of gossip. He is not indifferent to the botany and zoology of Abyssinia; attempts very learnedly to show that Rachel was more likely have coveted luscious figs, such as are produced in Ethiopia, than "stinking mandrakes;" but his strong point is the table-talk of his illustrious guest. Gregory's defective horsemanship was a great source of wonder to his friend, and Ludolf thus chronicles his opinion on the subject:—"It was troublesome to Gregory to ride on horseback, especially if the horse either trotted or galloped, a vexation which he frequently complained of." According to Gregory's testimony, the mule was the general hack of Abyssinia; so, painful as it may be to us to abandon all belief in the assertion of so grotesque a circumstance, we must hold that the hundred thousand negro horsemen, mounted on black horses, champions of Abyssinia, mentioned by Dapper, must have been as unsubstantial as Falstaff's men in buckram. Let the reader fancy Wouvernans seeking in vain "among the ranks of war" for a solitary white horse to light up the Stygian grimness of an Ethiopian battle-field. Poncet, however, mentions the existence of a splendid breed of horses near the sea-coast, whence the imperial stables were filled. Gregory was essentially a citizen of the world, having rather a generous weakness for a drop of good beer. "They (the Abyssinians) want hops," quoth Ludolf, "and butt their drink without it; and therefore Gregory, finding it was the nature of the hops which kept our drink so long, took great care to carry some seed along with him into his own country." If our expedition should by any means find pale ale established as an institution in Ethiopia, I trust they will not grudge a benison on the memory of Abbas Gregorius. Bearing in mind that Bermudez attributed to Moorish poison, ill effects experienced by his countrymen on drinking mead abandoned by the inhabitants of a plundered village—effects which might reasonably have attended the consumption of the liquor, pure and simple—I looked forward with hope to the mention, in the works of subsequent explorers, of the beneficial results of Gregory's forethought. Unfortunately, I find from Poncet that fifty years later mead was still the fashionable beverage of Abyssinia; and, for the benefit of experimental philosophers, I give his receipt for the production of mead, premising that I have not the slightest notion what one of the ingredients is. Put four pints of water to one of honey, and two ounces of barley (probably ground), and as much

Taddo (a root of the country); give them three hours to work in a warm place, rack the liquor off from time to time, and on the fourth day you get a liquid like sherry, of which Poncet speaks a good word, though he stigmatises it as "heady."

Gregory, to judge from his portrait, engraved in Pritchard's "History of Man," was a person of a pleasing and intellectual cast of countenance, approaching closer to the negro type than to what would seem to be the normal stamp of Amharican physique. While on the subject, it may be well to reproduce briefly the views of well-informed authorities on the subject of Ethiopian anthropology. Dr. Rüppel speaks of two classes of feature prevalent in Abyssinia: the one of Asiatic mould, prevailing in Tigré and Amhara; the other the markedly Ethiopian, observable in the north. A third class of the population, excluded by Dr. Rüppel as foreigners, are the Gallas, round of face and thick of feature, filling up, as Dr. Pritchard remarks, the transition from the Syro-Arabian type to that of the African negro. Alvarez gives a striking, albeit homely, description of the first-named type in the person of the king:—"In his colour and stature, he seemeth to be young. He is not very black, but of the colour of a chesnut, or of ruddy apples which are not very tawny, and showeth a great grace in his colour and countenance, and is of a middle stature: he is said to be twenty-three years old, and so he seemeth to be; he hath a round visage, great eyes, a hawk's nose, and his beard began to bud." Poncet speaks of the bulk of the people whom he saw as being not coal-black, but olive-brown, in complexion, and as being tall in stature: he notices that intermarriages with the Portuguese had given a tinge of foreign blood to the native stock, and states that he has heard that the empress of the day was of this mixed descent—a fact on which Baretti may have grounded his theory of a distinguishing hue being the portion of the royal family. The second type of feature before noticed is marked by a tendency to crisp hair and thick lips, with a less finely-developed nose. Captain Speke denies that there is any distinction of race between the Gallas and the Abyssinians proper, although he admits that a pastoral clan emigrating from the Asiatic continent became the governing caste, losing in progress of time its purity of race, but still maintaining a high stamp of Asiatic feature. The tribe known as Gallas he treats rather as a detached colony from the less migratory stock than as a distinct people. His view is entitled to respect, as that of a person well qualified to form an opinion; but the migration of the Gallas must have occurred at a very early date, for we find them appearing in Abyssinia in the time of Bermudez, as a race of inferior civilisation, between whom and their Abyssinian neighbours there existed an implacable hatred, unmitigated by any community

of traditions. Captain Speke classes the Gallas and Abyssinians collectively under the title Wahumo, and defines them as forming "the Semi-Shem-Hamitic race of Ethiopia," a definition which would have gladdened the heart of Captain Cuttle. Bruce renders the name Gallas as "shepherds:" it would be interesting to pursue the inquiry whether or not it has any affinity with the Teutonic root "Wal,"—foreign. We may here remark that Bruce demurs to the connection of the word "Habesh" with any notion of mixed descent. According to his construction of the term, Abyssinia is rather an aggregate of many nationalities than an amalgamation of individuals springing from different races. The philological student would learn much from the remarks of Dr. Beke on the languages and dialects spoken in the different districts of the country. Earlier authorities usually content themselves with the mention of two dominant tongues, besides the classical Ghiz, the speech of Amhara and that of Tigré.

I have seldom read a volume of travels with greater interest— notwithstanding the amount of labour involved in mastering a foreign language, rendered in unfamiliar type—than was produced by studying Poncet's Narrative of his Journey to Abyssinia, in the year 1698. In point of time the visit of the French physician to Ethiopia is not far removed from the journey of Abbas Gregory from it; but at the close of the seventeenth century an additional impetus seems to have been given to the progress of the suns. What a change we recognise between the times of the two commemorations of the Anglican Church—the execution of the unhappy Charles, and the accession of the conquering Dutchman. I think it was the late Lord Holland who designated liberalism the politics of the medical profession: nothing is more remarkable about this Ulysses of his time than his superiority to prejudices. It is only towards the end of his observations that he begins to growl, and then his equanimity is not disturbed by arid deserts, by whirling torrents, or the attacks of sickness, but by the sight of the British flag in the harbour of Massowah, and a reflection of how the English were watering at the teeth with a longing for Ethiopia. Not a bad specimen of a traveller, this; faultless in all points save a little tendency to bite his thumb at a combination of colours not to his taste. The sickness of the Negus was the means of introducing Dr. Poncet to his dominions. With an impulse akin to that which led Naaman to seek relief from one mightier than the leeches of Syria, Prester John despatched Hagi Alli (once more an Armenian) to Cairo, to obtain for him the services of a Frankish physician. The messenger made the acquaintance of Father Brevedent, a Jesuit missionary, who introduced him to the physician to the French Embassy, Charles Jaques Poncet, whose

skill had been applied advantageously to the relief of the ailments of the Churchman. With considerable courage in the case of both, the physician undertook to go to Ethiopia, and Father Brevedent volunteered to accompany him, disguised as his servant. A narrative of all the perils to which the party was exposed is not quite in keeping either with our subject or our space; but the simplicity of the style, as well as the weight of the matter of the Doctor's communication, render his adventures particularly interesting. At a distance from Cairo of half-an-hour, at a place called Bulack, the small expedition took ship, intending to pursue their course as far as the river was ordinarily navigable. At Manfelu, usually distant five days' journey from Cairo, but to our travellers fifteen, they had, from lowness of water, to abandon all hope of help from the river, and wait with patience until the formation of a caravan party should enable them to proceed by the customary land-route. *Apropos* of the mention of Bulack, I may remind the reader of Procopius's reference to Bullicas, the port of the Homerites on the Arabian shore of the Red Sea, communicating most readily with Ethiopia. I must leave to Arabic scholars the task of accounting for the similarity of name between the ancient and modern town. Until the 24th day of September had Poncet and his companions to tarry under canvas, during which time they suffered torments from the heat.

A small map accompanies the letter-press description of the route taken, but the localities mentioned therein are somewhat hard to be recognised under the more modern names bestowed upon them. Judging from the description given of the route, it was one of which practical ignorance were indeed bliss; neither bird, nor cattle, nor even wild beasts met the eye of the travellers. Nothing was to be beheld but sandhills and skeletons of camels, which, by the way-side, fell and perished, weary of the war of life. Helawe is given as the name of the town on the route where the Turkish dominion ceased, probably Haweela, about on the same degree of latitude as Suaken. Near a place described as Geesun there burst upon their eyes a magnificent forest of tamarinds, called Eideb; thence the travellers proceeded to Serké, a town containing five or six hundred houses, pleasantly situate between two hills, outside of which a little brook runs, dividing Ethiopia from Sennaar. It was on the 20th of June, 1699, that the expedition started for Gondar, having on their way to cross many streams, as also to scale a mountain, planted with trees of surprising height, which Poncet describes as the tallest in Abyssinia. The next halt was made at a village known as Tambisso, the revenues of which belonged to the Patriarch of Ethiopia. The track onwards seems to have been one of singular beauty, another high mountain lying in their way

covered with fig trees, while fields luxuriant with cotton lay below. The travellers found their enjoyment of the charms of nature much impaired by the loss of one of their camels by the attacks of lions, whose roarings made night hideous. On the 24th of June the River Gondova was crossed, a deep and rapidly flowing stream, then not quite as broad as the Seine at Paris. This stream falls into the River Tekezel, which Poncet describes as "the terrible," and with it falls into the Nile. This River Tekezel is described as being liable to floods, which sometimes detain the traveller ten days. Onwards the travellers' way led along a plain decked with pomegranates to Selmina, situate on the top of a high hill, "whence one can see the finest country in the world." At this point the aid afforded by camels was dispensed with on account of the proximity of a region too steep for the foot of that animal, and the growth of a herbage unsuited to its support. The emperor sent to this point an escort of thirty cavaliers. Sickness now fell upon the physician, and it was some few days ere he could resume his journey, which lay through Schulgen, the seat of a great trade in gold, cattle, and provisions. The neighbouring plain owed a surprising measure of fertility to the course of a fair stream. On the 9th of July poor Father Brevedent succumbed to dysentery, and his companion pays a simple and affecting tribute to his memory. On the 21st of July, more than a year after his departure from Cairo, Poncet reached Gondar, and on the following day had a private interview with the emperor. The public reception took place on the 10th of August, when the traveller passed through some twenty chambers to a great saloon, where the monarch, seated on a state divan, gave him audience. Poncet gives a very particular account of the imperial toilet, and notes with admiration a magnificent emerald, long a favourite stone in Ethiopia, which glittered on the forehead of royalty; but the presents of which Poncet was the bearer seem to have been scarcely in keeping with all this barbaric magnificence, though the recipient expressed himself highly delighted therewith. They consisted of paintings, looking-glasses, crystals, and the like; and are supposed to have been due to the generosity of the "Grand Monarque." The writer's impressions of Gondar may be thus epitomised. It contained a large square, wherein about 12,000 men might be seen under arms. The imperial palace was situated in the middle of the town, which, from its commanding position, it overlooked. It was an extensive building, containing as many as four chapels. Among the other lions of Gondar were the palace of the Princess Helscia, and about one hundred churches. The princess had a retinue of four or five hundred women, part of whose occupation was to celebrate her praise vocally and instrumentally—let us hope to the satisfaction of the august lady. Of the number of

worshippers in the churches we do not hear, but we are assured that there was no lack of clergy, as many as ten thousand priests and sixteen thousand deacons having been sometimes consecrated at a single ordination. How the convocations of the Abyssinian Church—if any—were conducted, I cannot divine. In German fashion, the writer estimates the extent of the town as three or four hours' walk in circumference; but he takes care to explain that the houses were almost universally of one story, and that the market-place served all commercial purposes, shops and warehouses being unknown.

An amusing little bit of autobiography here breaks the monotony of the physician's statistics. He was summoned to attend a high dignitary of the Church, who, however, unhappily died, and the folks' respect for the foreign doctor fell wonderfully in consequence. Of the constitution of the country, Poncet reports that the emperor was the sole allodial proprietor of all the estates and property of which his subjects were possessed. This possession involved a liability to attend the monarch in his wars, pursuant to a system analogous to our feudal tenure. On the death of any occupier, the lord usually suffered the representatives of the deceased to retain two-thirds of his property, granting the remaining third to a new fendsman. The process of investiture he describes as taking effect by the transmission of a riband or fillet inscribed with these words, "Jesus, the Emperor of Ethiopia, of the tribe of Judah, who hath overcome his enemies on all sides." The sacred name is not, as we might think, an invocation, but the designation of the monarch. Our authority has given us an account of the nectar of the Ethiopians: thus much for the ambrosia served at a high festival: Beef cut into morsels, served with ox-gall, and seasoned with roots of the country. Truly the gods, the guests of the blameless Ethiopians, must have had much of the *dura messorum ilia* to have done justice to the bill of fare.

The visitor, but for his ill-health, would have had an excellent opportunity of judging of the fighting qualities of the Abyssinian army, which, at that time, was engaged in a campaign against the old enemies of the empire, the Gallas; but although he puts the military strength of the empire in rather round figures, he admits that his remarks do not proceed from his own observations. The *rendezvous* of the army was at Arrangui, an important station garrisoned by five thousand men, under the command of an officer of distinction. The enemy had adopted the use of poison for their weapons, and thereby caused no small consternation among the Abyssinian warriors, until the latter discovered a plan of neutralising the poison, by a very rude means of applying ammonia to the wound. Among other matters treated of by our observant traveller,

is the civet-trade of Amfras, distant about half-a-day's journey from Gondar—inferior to the latter town in size, but excelling it in the quality of its buildings. As many as three hundred cats occupied the attention of a single dealer. The diet of the animals—apparently more delicate than that of their owners—consisted of beef on three days of the week, and of milk-porridge on the remainder. Poncet mentions, also, having seen, on the lake Tzana, hippopotami, differing in the shortness of their ears from the ordinary species; and some of these Tzanic hippopotami were red. On an island in the lake, called the island of St. Claude, the Emperor had a palace surpassing that at Gondar in magnificence, and the physician was for three days the guest of the emperor in this charming retreat. One other zoological peculiarity of Abyssinia is specified: “A wonderful little animal, not much bigger than a cat, but with a head like a man's, and with a white beard. It remains always on those trees on which it was born, and there dies. It is, moreover, so wild that it is untameable; for when captured and kept in the house, it pines to death.”

On the 2nd of May, 1700, the good Frenchman started for Cairo, *viâ* Sire and Massowah. Of Sire, he records that it is the most fruitful and beautiful part of Ethiopia, the meadows being then full of lilies, ranunculi, gilliflowers, and white and red roses. Invalid as he was, and doubtless longing for familiar faces, Poncet seems to have left Abyssinia with regret. “There is no such beautiful land,” he says, “as Ethiopia. There are whole fields of cardamums and ginger, of a very pleasant odour, and four times as large as the Indian. The number of streams causes the land to be well watered, and, either bank, is gay with lilies, narcissi, and jonquils, and a thousand other flowers unknown in Europe. The woods and thickets are full of orange-trees, jasmines, and pomegranates, and many other trees, whose beautiful blossoms yield a most delicious fragrance; there are also rose-trees far lovelier than ours.”

Those of our readers who only know the worthy doctor by our introduction will be glad to hear that he reached Cairo in safety: the malady of his patient is not much dwelt on; let us hope that it was not of a very acute character, or the sufferer's patience must have been sorely tried by the long absence of his messenger.

The Frenchman seems to have been of a very different character from Bruce; for in lieu of claiming the merit of having discovered, or materially added to, our stock of information respecting the source of the Nile, he apologises for his inability to journey so far, and gives the following account of the spring-head of the river, as communicated to him by an old gentleman of 104:—

“In the kingdom of Gojani,” said he, “there is an extremely

high mountain, on the top of which rise two copious streams, the one towards the east, the other towards the west, which, uniting lose themselves in a morass overgrown with reeds and rushes, amidst which the course of the stream is lost to sight for ten or twelve hours' journey therefrom. At this point the Nile bursts forth in a quickly-flowing river, which, by the accession of divers rills, is materially increased; thence it passes through a large lake, without mingling therewith its waters, as does the Rhine in the Bodensee at Costnitz—the distinction between the two lakes being that the Abyssinian reservoir is incomparably greater, being some 70,000 German miles long and 27 miles broad. It acquires, from its extent, the name of the Sea of Dembea. The country round here is an earthly paradise."

There seems no more persistent determination on the part of our ill-informed countrymen than in judging the whole of Abyssinia from the appearance presented by Massowah, a place which, in Lobro's time, was dependent for its fresh water on supplies obtained from a distance of twelve miles. Neither space nor regard for our readers will admit of my dealing with modern and easily accessible works as I have dealt with comparatively little-known authorities. I cannot forbear from citing Dr. Beke as a witness decidedly favourable to the character of Ethiopia. In his letter of 3rd March, 1841, the Doctor thus expresses himself: "Fancy my being here (Andobar), within ten degrees of the line—dog-roses, honeysuckles, jasmine, and blackberries in the hedges, stinging-nettles in the ditches, and buttercups in fields of grass quite as fine as those of England. But there is every climate here within the extent of a few miles, and the country will produce anything."

The reader of Bruce's travels will doubtless remember how keenly sensitive that author is as to his right to the sole merit of the discovery of the sources of the (Blue) Nile. Had I any belief in spiritualism, I should tremble as I propounded the idea, but I feel strongly disposed to speculate on the petulance the shade of Bruce would exhibit on being interrogated as to its recognition of the claims of succeeding explorers to have traced to its source the venerable Nile. He argues fiercely, and, withal, somewhat logically, against the right of prior pilgrims to take credit for any knowledge bearing on the subject, and suggests that the description of the Fountains of the Nile ascribed to Paez is an interpellation by a subsequent writer. Our irascible countryman is certainly entitled to all possible respect for his courage and perseverance; but there is something rather amusing in the discovery of a mystery by one to whom it is accurately revealed. If any subject of King Theodore should pay a visit to the neighbourhood of Cheltenham, we should regard with mingled indignation and amazement his

claim to have discovered the source of the Thames. We append the account attributed to Paez, with the remark that the information is, from whatever source derived, useful, as giving us a clue to the state of geographical knowledge prior to the Bruce *avatar*. The Ethiopians call it (the Nile) Abri. It takes its source in the kingdom of Gojam in the province of Sahala, the inhabitants of which are called Agoas and are Christians, but by the evil of the times and the desolation of the Church, they have become corrupted by divers superstitions, and scarcely differ from their idolatrous neighbours. The source of the Nile is on the summit of a ridge, which is level and surrounded by mountains. In the year 1618, April 21st, being in the suite of the Emperor and in his army, I mounted this elevation, and examined all things with the utmost exactitude. I found there two circular springs, each four palms in diameter, and I beheld with pleasure what the Kings of Persia, Cyrus and Cambysses, Alexander and the famous Julius Cæsar, had wished to see with so much earnestness without having been able to accomplish their wish, notwithstanding prayers and promises. The water of the source is clear, transparent, and of good taste; however, it must be remarked that these two eyes of the spring do not issue on the top of the mountain, but that they disappear from view at the bottom of the ridge. I sounded the depths of those fountains, and having plunged into the first a pike of eleven palms length, it seemed to me to get entangled among some roots of trees. The second source is situate to the East, at about a stone's throw. I first tried the depth of this fountain with a pike of twelve palms length, but could not reach the bottom; I then joined two pikes of twenty palms each, but I could not yet touch anything solid. The inhabitants say that the mountain is quite full of water, and they demonstrate it by the fact that the ground surrounding the fountain quakes, which is a sure sign of subterranean water. The Ethiopians, and the Emperor even, who were present, told me that the earth had not been shaken very recently, on account of the extraordinary drought, but that in some years the earth trembled so violently that one could not approach without peril. . . . At a distance of a league, in a deep valley, we beheld spring from the depth of the earth another river, which flows into the Nile. . . . Thus the river is constantly increased by the accession of other streams. After a course of a day's journey it receives a great river known as Jà Mâ. After this it takes its course towards the west, till about twenty or thirty leagues from its source; then it changes its route, and returning towards the east, falls into a great lake; but although its waters are mingled with those of the lake, the current of the Nile is easily recognisable. Escaping from this lake it makes certain twists in turning towards the south and waters the country of Atala."

The description then goes on to indictate the source of the Nile, points out the cataracts, and mentions a point which the Emperor had bridged, for facility of removing his army. Kircher, a learned geographer of the seventeenth century, endorses with his approval the foregoing description, which he claims to have translated from the original Portuguese of Paez.

If the preceding account be approximately correct, and it does not appear to be strikingly at variance with Bruce's report, that traveller does not add to the lustre of his own explorations by shewing that the generally received account cannot be ascribed to Paez, but must be attributed to some unknown author. Bruce, indeed, deals accurately with questions of latitude and longitude (10.59.11 36.55.30), which apparently were almost undreamt of in the philosophy of the Jesuits.

We append some brief extracts from the works of other writers showing that the origin of Blue Nile was not quite so lost in mystery as Bruce affected to imagine.

"Returning from Damote by the River Nilus, downward by the Red Sea, we came to the kingdom of Gojam, which bordereth presently upon Damote. By the other arm of Nilus, below Gojam, more neighbouring, is another kingdom of the Abexins, ancient Christians great and good, called Dembia. In this, Nilus maketh a great lake which hath in length thirty leagues, and twenty in breadth, wherein are many small islands. . . . And this is not the spring whence Nilus proceedeth, for it cometh from far abroad."—*Bermudez, in Purchas*.

"The springhead of this famous river first shows itself in a certain land, which is called Secut, upon the top of Dengla, near Gojam, west of Bagamedre, Dana (the river Tzana), and Buda. Rising there, it hastens with a direct course eastwards, and so enters the Lake of Dana (Tzana) and Buda, swimming, as it were, over it. Passing from thence it flows between Gojam and Bagamedre, but leaving them on the right and left, speeds directly towards Amhara."—*Ludolf, on authority of Gregory*.

Here, then, in Abyssinia, almost in the middle of the kingdom of Gojam, of which I spoke in the last chapter, but a little towards the west, in the twelfth degree of northern latitude, is a country called "Salahala," inhabited by a people known as "Agoas," most of whom are heathens, but some retain the name of Christians. This country is mountainous, though not more so than the bordering territories. In the middle of the mountains is an elevated plateau of equal elevation for about the space of a third of a league, in the centre of which is a small lake about a stone's throw in diameter. The lake is full of some small trees which have their roots so entangled, that in the summer one may, by walking upon

them, approach two principal springs, nearly a stone's throw distant each from the other, whence the water rises in a clear and powerful stream. From these springs the water gushes by two courses towards the aforesaid lake ; thence it escapes by a subterranean channel, which is distinguishable by the richness of vegetation on the surface. The direction of the stream is, for a good musket-shot, towards the east, but it subsequently turns towards the north."

The remark of Sir Samuel Baker respecting the inadequacy of the Blue Nile to affect the irrigation of Egypt is well worthy of notice, and might, one would think, have been anticipated by Bruce. Sir Samuel's observation is as follows: "The parched sandy soil of the latter river (the Atbara) absorbs the entire supply, nor does one drop of water reach the Nile from the Atbara during the dry season: the wonderful absorption by the sand of that river is an illustration of the impotence of the Blue Nile to contend unaided, with the Nubian Deserts, which, were it not for the steady volume of the White Nile, would drink every drop of water before the river could pass the 25th degree of latitude."

BALLADS AND SONGS OF DERBYSHIRE*

"I sigh for the land where the orange-tree flingeth
 Its prodigal bloom on the myrtle below ;
 Where the moonlight is warm, and the gondolier singeth,
 And clear waters take up the strain as they go.

Oh ! fond is the longing, and rapt is the vision,
 That stirs up my soul over Italy's tales ;
 But the *present* was bright as the far-off Elysian,
 When I roved in the sun-flood through Derbyshire dales.

There was joy for my eye, there was balm for my breathing,
 Green branches above me—blue streams at my side ;
 The hand of creation seemed proudly bequeathing
 The beauty reserved for a festival tide.

I was bound, like a child, by some magical story,
 Forgetting the 'South' and Ionian vales,
 And felt that dear England had temples of glory,
 Where any might worship, in Derbyshire dales.

Sweet pass of the 'Dove' 'mid rock, river, and dingle,
 How great is thy charm for the wanderer's breast !
 With thy moss-girdled towers and foam-jewelled shingle,
 Thy mountains of might, and thy valleys of rest.

I gazed on thy wonders—lone, silent, adoring,
 I bent at the altar, whose 'fire never pales ;'
 The Great Father was with me—devotion was pouring
 Its holiest praises in Derbyshire dales.

Wild glen of dark 'Taddington,' rich in thy robing
 Of forest-green cloak, with grey lacing bedight,
 How I lingered to watch the red western rays probing,
 Thy leaf-mantled bosom with lances of light !

And 'Monsal,' thou mine of Arcadian treasure,
 Need we seek for 'Greek islands,' and spice-laden gales,
 While a temple like thee, of enchantment and pleasure,
 May be found in our own native Derbyshire dales ?

There is much in my past bearing ~~way~~-marks and flowers,
 The purest and rarest in odour and bloom ;
 There are beings and breathings, and places and hours,
 Still trailing in roses o'er memory's tomb.

And when I shall count o'er the bliss that's departed,
 And old age be telling its garrulous tales,
 Those days will be first when the kind and true-hearted
 Were nursing my spirit in Derbyshire dales."

Such is the testimony of Eliza Cook to the charm and sublimity
 of the Derbyshire scenery, which has been the theme for glowing

* The Ballads and Songs of Derbyshire ; with illustrated notes and examples
 of the original music, &c. Edited by LLEWELLYN JEWITT, F.S.A., &c., &c.
 London and Derby : Bemrose, 1867.

eulogy and enthusiastic description to all who have wandered amid the glories of Dovedale, the hills rising up solemnly around the traveller, until they seem to touch the heavens above; or who have gazed upon the gigantic form of the Chee Tor, as it juts in rugged majesty from the waters of the Wye. Derbyshire has few detractors, most of her visitors are ready to endorse Fuller's quaint observation: "God, who is truly *thaumaturgus*, the only Worker of Wonders, hath more manifested His might in this than in any other county in England." That these solemn and patriarchal hills should often echo the sylvan song, that these vales should be legend haunted, that the caverns of the Peak should be as rich in traditional lore as in natural wonders, is not surprising; the matter for wonderment is that until the present year, no hand has endeavoured to rescue from the destroyer these fleeting and transitory memorials of bygone modes of thought and action.

Mr. Llewellynn Jewitt, of Derby, whose reputation as an antiquary is deservedly high, and who has devoted the greater part of his life to the elucidation of the history and folk lore of his native county, has at length supplied this desideratum, and presented to the world the first of a series of volumes intended to illustrate the poets and poetry, the political and criminal songs, the folk lore and traditions of Derbyshire. The present instalment is interesting and valuable enough to make us hope that Mr. Jewitt will meet with what he deserves—a hearty support, which may induce him speedily to favour us with the succeeding volumes. These local anthologies, when they are, as in the present instance, compiled by careful and competent editors, generally offer much pleasant reading. Of course there are productions which *can* only be interesting within a certain radius from their birth-place, but these may perchance be of peculiar use to the historian of some particular phase of manners.

Beyond those things having a purely local interest, there are in the present volume many remarkable either for their poetic fire and beauty, or for a certain quaint simplicity, which has a *naïve* enchantment of its own. Moreover these collections, if correctly and honestly done, will render no inconsiderable service to the philologist, to the literary antiquary, and to all those who like at times to wander in the bye-ways of literature. For ourselves, we must confess to a fondness for old ballads; we

"Love the ballads of a people,
That, like voices from afar off,
Call to us to pause and listen,
Speak in tones so plain and childlike;
Scarcely can the ear distinguish,
Whether they are sung or spoken."

We are always glad to hear the echoes of some old ditty which may

once have added to the mirth at the merry "Mermaid" tavern, or been trolled out by some brown-faced sailor of Sir Francis Drake's.

One of the ballads in this volume relates to our old friend Dick Whittington. Who has not at one time believed in that mythical personage, with faith superior to that we feel for the heroes of Froude and Macaulay? Who has not sympathised with his laddish troubles, and listened with rapt attention to the voice of destiny clanging forth from the bells of Bow? Vain once upon a time would have been the attempt to shake one single iota our belief in the entire historical accuracy of that narrative. We should have looked with horror on the rash theorist who ventured to doubt on this subject; and as for the parallel Persian tradition, what did that matter? If the Persians chose to have a Whittington of their own, was that any reason why we should be deprived of ours? But the spoilers have gone forth, and Whittington and his cat, like many other pleasant delusions, have passed away.

Mr. Riley has suggested that as trading was in Whittington's time known to the better classes as *a cat*, a misapprehension of the term may have given rise to the popular legend. This has some appearance of probability, but what then are we to think of Keis, the son of the widow of the Shiraf, and of Alphonso the Portuguese, of whom the same strange tale has been elated? The claims of this ballad to be considered a Derbyshire one are, we think, rather slight. The ballad itself makes Dick a native of Lancashire, but another version which we have before us in chap-book form states that he was born at Taunton Dean, in Somersetshire.

The famous "Ram of Derby," perhaps the best known of all the songs of Derbyshire, has about it all that rollicking exaggeration which forms so principal an ingredient in certain forms of Yankee humour. We are certain that, if transplanted, it would soon become popular with our American cousins.

"The space between his horns, sir,
Was as far as a man could reach;
And there they built a pulpit,
For the parson there to preach.

The butcher that killed this ram, sir,
Was *drowned* in the blood;
And the boy that held the pail, sir,
Was carried away in the flood.

Indeed, sir, this is true, sir,
I never was taught to lie;
And had you been to Derby, sir,
You'd have seen it as well as I."

From the grotesque humour of this ballad we may turn to "The Driving of the Deer," an old Derbyshire tradition, which

has thus been versified by Mr. William Bennett, author of the "King of the Peak." We have quoted sufficient to show the character of this poem, which brings vividly before us some of the bygone incidents of English life. The situation is wrought out with dramatic effect, and we can fancy the baffled rage and scorn of the haughty Norman when thus braved by one of the conquered race.

"Lord Peveril stood on the Lordis seat,
And an angry man was he,
For he heard the sound of a hunter's horn
Slow winding up the lea.
He looked to north, he looked to south,
And east and west looked he;
And 'Holy Cross!' the fierce Norman cried,
'Who hunts in my country?'

'Hold hard! they're here,' the Peveril said.
And upward held his hand,
Whilst all his meany kept behind,
Awaiting their lord's command.
And westward, on the Bolt-edge Moor,
Beyond the rocky height,
Both hounds and hunters, men and horse,
And deer were all in sight.

Up spake his frere, Payne Peveril, then,
Of Whittington lord was he,
And said, 'Fair Sir, for ruth and grace,
This slaughter may not be.
The Saxon's lands are widely spread,
And he holds them in capite,
And claims three days with hawk and hound,
To wind his bugle free.'

'Beshrew his horn, and beshrew his heart,
In my forest he may not ride;
If he kills a deer, by the Conqueror's bow,
By forest law he shall bide.
Ride on, Sir Payne, and tell the churl
He must cease his hunting cheer,
And come to the knee of his suzerain lord,
Awaiting his presence here.'"

Sir Payne delivers his message—

"'No man of his,' cried the Franklin, 'then
Am I, as he knows full well,
Though within the bounds of his forest walk
It likes me sooth to dwell.
My manor of Bowden I hold in chief
From good King Harry, I trow;
And to him alone will I homage pay,
And make my fealty vow."

'Beware, Sir Franklin,' cried Sir Payne,
'Beware how thou play the fool!
To brave the ire of thy suzerain lord
Will lead to direful dule.

Come on with me and make thy peace,
Better do that than worse;
He'll hang thee on the forest tree
If we take thee hence perforce.'

'Take me you can't while I have thews,
And these have bows and spears,'
Cries the brave Franklin. "Threaten him
Who the Lord Peveril fears.
We've broke no forest law to-day,
Our hunting here's my right;
And ye can only force me hence
If strongest in the fight.'

Well was it for the Saxons then
The Normans rode unarmed,
Or they had scarcely left that field
And homeward gone unharmed.
Lord Peveril viewed their bows and spears,
And marked their strong array,
And grimly smiled and softly said,
'We'll right this wrong some day.'

But his subsequent exile and disgrace prevented him carrying into effect any scheme of revenge which he may have harboured. Not without his good points was this grim Norman.

"So heaven receive his soul at last,
He was a warrior brave;
And Pope and Priest were joined in mass
His guilty soul to save.
For Holy Church and Kingly Crown
He was ever a champion true;
For chivalry and ladies' grace,
Chivoler foial et preux."

A charming old song is the "Rural Dance about the Maypole," and one well known to all lovers of those good country ballads which seem to be imbued with the very spirit of the frolic spring-time, and remind us that our sedate island was once "merrie England." Mr. Jewitt has printed a version—whether the original one or not remains to be seen—of this ballad under the title of the 'Humours of Hayfield Fair.'

"Come lasses and lads, take leave of your dads,
And away to the fair let's hie,
For every lad has gotten his lass,
And a fiddler standing by;
For Jenny has gotten Jack,
And Nancy has gotten her Joe,
With Dolly and Tommy—good luck,
How they jig it to and fro!

"Thus after an hour they tript to a bower,
To play for ale and cakes,
And kiasas, too,—until they were due
The maidens held the stakes;

The women then began
 To quarrel with the men,
 And bad them take their kisses back,
 And gi' 'em their own again."

Derbyshire also claims a share in the ballads relating to Robin Hood, that worthy's right-hand man, the famous Little John, being, according to tradition, a native of Hathersage, where they show his grave, ten feet long. Up to a recent period his forester's cap hung in the church, but it has now disappeared, and the sanctity of his grave has twice been disturbed by the prying of morbid curiosity. On the last occasion a thigh bone, measuring thirty-two inches, was taken away. We have no intention of entering into any disquisition concerning Robin Hood and his merry men all, who have so indelibly stamped their image on the minds of our peasantry. Some we know are for abolishing them altogether as real personages, and sending them to the land of the myth; but we think it probable that, allowing for exaggeration, for intentional and unintentional corruptions and modifications of the original form of these traditions, there may yet be a certain residuum of historical facts about them.

We have placed at the head of our paper some lines of Eliza Cook's, but Derbyshire has not wanted singers of her own, able and willing to chant her praises, as the following beautiful poem by Arthur Jewitt, Esq., the editor's father, will amply show—

" Oh, give me the land where the wild thyme grows
 The heathery dales among;
 Where Sol's own flower with crimson eye
 Creeps the sun-burnt banks along!
 Where the beetling For hangs over the dell,
 While its pinnacles pierce the sky,
 And its foot is laved by the waters pure
 Of the lively murmuring Wye;
 Oh give me the land where the crimson heather,
 The thyme and the bilberry, grow together.
 Oh! where upon earth is another land,
 So green, so fine, so fair?
 Can any within old England's bounds,
 With this heathery land compare?
 The mountain air, the crystal springs,
 Where health has established her throne;
 The flood swollen torrent, the bright cascade,
 Belong to this land alone;
 Oh give me the land where grow together,
 The marj'ram, cistus, and purple heather.
 Oxford may boast of its hundred spires,
 Its colleges, halls, and towers;
 Built it an ague producing marsh
 Are the muses and learning's bowers;
 Oh, tell me not of the sluggish stream,
 Or the lazy to creep along;

Too dull to inspire a poet's dream—
 This is not the land of song !
 No, give me the land where grow together,
 The cistus, the thyme, and the purple heather."

The extracts which we have given will, we hope, be sufficient to convey some idea of the varied and interesting contents of this volume. We do not stay our hand now from any lack of suitable materials for farther remark, as the reader will find if he takes our advice, and examine the book for himself. Had we space, we should have quoted the curious particulars about the human scull, which acts as the guardian spirit of Tanstead Farm, and the humorous and clever address to it, written by Samuel Laycock, one of those self-taught singers of whom Lancashire is proud.

We shall not attempt any generalisation upon the peculiar characteristics of the Derbyshire muse ; that may be better done when we have Mr. Jewitt's succeeding volumes before us ; for the present we may content ourselves with saying that the older ballads are very curious historical relics, and many of the modern ones show a great power of reproducing the incidents of epochs very different from the present age.

Derbyshire has sometimes been charged with the possession of many of those qualities which marked the ancient Boetia, and we cannot do better than close our gossip with the following indignant vindication of her fame from this slander.

" ' I Darbyshire who're born and bred,
 Are strong i' th' arm, bu' weak i' th' head :'
 So th' lying proverb says.
 Strength o' th' arm, who doubts shall feel :
 Strength o' th' head, it's power can seal
 The lips that scoff, always.
 The rich-veined mine, the mountain hoar,
 We sink, and blast, and pierce, and bore,
 By th' might o' Darby brawn.
 And Darby brain can think and plon,
 As well as that o' ony mon,
 And clearly as the morn.
 ' Strong i' th' arm, and strong i' the head,'
 The fou' fause proverb should ha' said,
 If th' truth she meant to tell.
 Bu' th' union, so wise and rare,
 O' *brawns* and *brains* she didna' care,
 To see or speak of well.
 The jealous jade, nor Darby born,
 Where praise wor due pour'd forth bu' scorn,
 And lying words let fau.
 Bu' far above the proverb stands,
 The Truth, that God's almighty hands
 Ha' welded strength and mind in one,
 And poured it down i' plenty on
 Born Darbyshire menau."

These clever lines by Mr. Walter Kirkland first appeared in that pleasant antiquarian miscellany, "The Reliquary."

“ THEN ” AND “ NOW ”

“ THEN.”

ONCE on a time when we were young,
Thy name was ever on my tongue,
From morning until night I sung
In praise of my love, Nelly.

The daisie and the primrose sweet
Grew wan with passion, when her feet
Like summer on their blossoms beat,
So light the step of Nelly.

The rose blush'd red through every vein,
When Nelly brake the stalk in twain ;
And longed for life to die again
By thy small fingers, Nelly.

The green, green leaves on beachen tree
Grew pale* with jealousie to see
The wind of Heaven blowing free
Through thy dark tresses, Nelly.

And ah ! the world was very fair,
When we were young, and thou wert there,
To lighten land, and sea, and air,
So sweet the smile of Nelly.

* * * *

“ NOW.”

The world has changed. Ah ! wel-away !
The splendour vanished from the day,
Alas ! that I should live to say,
Farewell to love and Nelly.

The parting came when trees were green ;
And lapse of seasons came between,
And shattered all the love had been
Between myself and Nelly.

I thought the love had all been shed,
I buried Hope when Love was dead,
Till yesternorn her brother said,
“ Why here is Sister Nelly ! ”

* Alluding to the fact that when the wind blows upon the beech, the upturned leaves show white.

The blood leapt up with fierce, sharp pain,
And stung through every blushing vein,
And ebbd and flowd, and ebbd again,
All at the name of Nelly !

As when the wind of Summer blows,
And smites with sudden life the rose ;
Dead Hopes and buried Loves arose,
All at the thought of Nelly !

As when the wind across the wold
Smites to the death the rose with cold,
Died risen Hopes and Loves of old,
All at the sight of Nelly !

For ah ! though winsome still the air,
And still the face as ever fair,
There is a something wanting there—
’Tis not my old love, Nelly !

I stifle back wild thoughts that stir,
For though they say she’s lovelier,
The old, old love, is dead in her,
She is no longer Nelly !

J. F.

FROM BEYROUT TO JERUSALEM

AFTER suffering inexpressible anguish from the effects of fatigue, under a burning Syrian sun, on the 5th of April, 1860, I gazed for the first time upon Mount Zion, and upon the hallowed City of David. The captain of the Austrian Lloyd's steamer, in which I had taken my passage from Alexandria to Joppa, having attempted in vain, owing to the state of the weather, to put us ashore there, was compelled to go to Beyrout, where we landed on the 24th of March.

My first care at Beyrout (which, by the way, is a very charming place) was to find some suitable and comfortable fellow-travellers for my intended journey along the Syrian seaboard to Jerusalem, and my exertions to this end were rewarded with the most complete success that could be desired. My companions, three in number, besides our dragoman, were all of them young men of my own age or thereabouts, and comprised a good-natured Scotchman, the son of a Glasgow merchant, who was imbued with a fair share of the caution which is the characteristic quality of his country; an American theological student, and candidate for holy orders; and an indefatigable German, with a fine intellect, classical taste, and immense information, chaplain to the Prussian Legation at Naples.

As the great Easter festival was close at hand, when thousands of enthusiastic pilgrims flock to the Holy City from all parts of Southern Europe, and when the means of locomotion are everywhere eagerly sought for, we met with extreme difficulty in obtaining horses, tents, and a honest dragoman. It was fortunate for us in this that the Prussian Consul at Beyrout happened to be a fellow-countryman, and a personal friend of the chaplain's, or it seemed more than probable that we should have been compelled, either to undertake our journey to Jerusalem on foot, or to abandon it altogether; but just when we began to think our case desperate the Prussian Consul sent for him and informed him, to our delight, that with much trouble he had succeeded in securing for us an experienced dragoman, upon whose honesty and fidelity we might depend, and four horses, which he advised us to purchase; at the same time generously placing his own tents at our disposal, as no others could be found in Beyrout just then. Having made ourselves owners of these horses, together with half-a-dozen sumpter mules for the conveyance of our baggage and the tents, finally a contract was drawn up between ourselves and the dragoman, which was duly signed by him, and by all of us, in the presence of our obliging friend the Prussian Consul, whom I shall ever remember

with esteem, and whose conduct to us on this occasion not only entitles him to our gratitude, but sets an example which certain sleek, well-paid, consequential and utterly useless beings, who profess to represent a certain great country, in certain parts of the world, and in the like capacity, might without prejudice to certain national interests imitate a little oftener than they do at present.

Early, then, in the morning of the 28th of March, we set out from Beyrout for Jerusalem, travelling along the coast-line. We started in high spirits, well mounted, and exhibiting every possible variety of head-dress, or, as is 'ycleped in India, *puggery*, by way of protection against the rays of the scorching sun. We either walked our horses or galloped them, the trot being a pace of which they seemed quite incapable. Scarcely had we completed our first mile, however, when the Arab steed which carried our transatlantic cousin and fellow-pilgrim, either conscious that its master's horsemanship was susceptible of improvement, or else impatient of Yankee subordination, reared and flung its rider over its head to the ground. The American escaped without a scratch, and was reseated in his saddle the next minute; but our Scotch friend for a long time after put on a grave countenance, and declared that the accident was an omen, which, at the outset of our long journey, boded "na guid to ony of us." It was with difficulty that we laughed him out of this superstition, which the gloomy character of the scenery we were passing, acting upon his Celtic temperament, was by no means calculated to dispel; for we now commenced traversing those Phœnician plains, over which, as Gibbon truly writes, "a mournful and desolate silence prevails." The language of description can do but scant justice to their wild and picturesque grandeur. Now and then, at long and weary intervals, a mounted Arab, armed to the teeth, scowled with sinister suspicion at our escort, as he dashed past. With such exceptions, this country, once so populous, and so famous in the world's history, as well for its wide-spread commerce as for its cultivation of the arts, seemed to be quite deserted; exhibiting no sign of agriculture where the soil would often and most richly have repaid the toil of cultivation, and echoing the cry of the jackal, and the croak of the Syrian frog, in places once filled with the busy hum of a teeming populace. Here and there, the fragment of an architrave, or the broken shaft of a lonely granite column, or a shapeless block of dazzling white marble, with a strange melancholy-looking bird perched on it, carried back our thoughts eighteen centuries, and forced upon us feelings and sentiments something analogous to those described by Volney, in his "Ruins of Empires." A curse seems to brood over this awful wilderness, which though, sublime in its solitude, becomes monotonous and oppressive to the traveller after awhile.

Our first halting-place from Beyrout was Sidon. Here we encamped in a rude burying-ground, nearly full of shattered and nameless tombstones; and here we passed our first night under canvas. A young baronet, who had two or three days' start of us from Beyrout, and had been shooting jackals with an English companion, and a dragoman—the same who was in the service of the Rev. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley,* at the time he travelled and wrote his admirable book on Palestine—we found already encamped in the same enclosure. Each man, at this dragoman's request, took good care before retiring to rest to place his loaded revolver within reach—a precaution which we never after neglected until we arrived in Jerusalem.

From Sidon, we travelled on to the sister city, Tyre; making *en route*, an excursion across some wild and mountainous country to Jûn or Djouni, formerly the residence of Pitt's eccentric and unparagoned niece, Hester Stanhope, *Queen of Palmyra* (for with that title the Arabs are said actually to have invested her), a woman of rare parts, and of extraordinary physical courage; but who, in spite of her powerful intellect, either was, or pretended that she was, a slave to superstitions and to delusions worthier of an Indian Faquir. Her strange career has been referred to many causes, the most intelligible of which seems to be that of a catastrophe in the tender passion. It is well known that after the death of her lover, Sir John Moore, the hero who fell so gloriously in his country's service at Corunna, poor Lady Hester moped and became an ascetic; and it is probable that, finding England a land too full of painful associations to be longer tolerable, she withdrew to this sequestered spot, where she reigned in barbaric sovereignty until death. On reaching the remains of the once superb Tyre—a small peninsula, and a mud village—the only people there who gave a sign of life were a few fishermen spreading their nets in the sunshine to dry; and the Prussian chaplain at once drew our attention to the prophecy in the Book of Ezekiel, chap. xxvi. v. 5, "Tyre shall be a place for the spreading of nets, for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God," which has thus received so signal a verification.

From Tyre we pushed on to Acre, the ancient Ptolemais, which was pronounced by Napoleon to be the "Key of Palestine," and which the consummate skill and obstinate bravery of Sir Sidney Smith preserved from his grasp in 1799. After a siege of sixty days and the loss of 3000 out of 12,500 men, Napoleon, leaving the "Key of Palestine" still in English hands, returned with the miserable mockery of a triumphal march to Cairo, which he entered in great state, as though his enterprise had been a brilliant success,

instead of one of the most dismal failures recorded in the history of war. As at Ascalon, there are still a few traces of the Crusaders, both within and without the walls of this celebrated town, and an old dilapidated building erected by the Knights Hospitallers is now, I believe, a military hospital. The Latin monks in the convent here are an exceedingly handsome and jovial set of fellows. They were very anxious for the latest European news, and were particularly inquisitive about the Pope, and the posture of political affairs in Rome; the preponderating idea with them being, that His Holiness could with difficulty hold his own in the Eternal City, which, i' faith, wasn't far from the truth; and that the Holy Father would, before many months, find it convenient to seek an asylum at the hands of his dutiful children in Dublin. Three of these monks were so obliging as to escort us over the town and fortress. Finally they gave us their blessing, together with letters of recommendation to their brethren on Mount Carmel.

From St. Jean D'Acre our next journey was to Kaiffa, a particularly wretched town at the foot of Carmel, to the top of which mount, where the convent stands, the Carmelite monks have made an excellent pathway. Within the walls of the convent we were permitted to enter Elijah's Cave (!), which the Carmelites have turned into a chapel, and a very gorgeous and dazzling little place of worship it is. We were afterwards conducted to the plateau where the priests are said to have sacrificed in vain to Baal; and although I received much that was told me by the holy men who accompanied us, *cum grano salis*; passages and chorusses in Mendelssohn's sublime oratorios, often flitted through my brain, while we rambled over the mount, consecrated, at all events, by the history of Elijah. The convent, flanked by clean and solid white walls, and exhibiting an extensive and even handsome frontage that oddly contrasts with the squalor of the town below, was rebuilt chiefly by the piety and munificence of French subscribers, on the site of the original edifice that had been sacked and then burned to the ground by the Turks during Napoleon's retreat from Acre, and is the finest, and, probably, the richest in Palestine. The Carmelite gave us *bon accueil*, and, like our friends at Acre, quite delighted us by their extreme good nature, and by their perfect frankness of character. Being at the time in a suffering state, I felt very much tempted to remain and recruit myself in repose there for a week. I am glad, however, I did not yield to a temptation which would have separated me for the rest of my pilgrimage from three of the most agreeable fellow-travellers whom it has been my good fortune to meet. The view from the roof of this convent is enchanting, and the establishment is in all respects the most grateful retreat for way-worn tourists in the East.

In the long and dreary ride by the sea-shore from Tyre to Kaiffa I felt seriously ill, and was seized with violent pains in the head, the effects of a scorching and glaring sun, reflected by the bright yellow sands over which we were travelling. At last, and about three-quarters of a mile from the town, which, instead of drawing nearer, seemed, on the contrary, to recede further and further from my view, I became bewildered, lost the control of my horse, and fancied every moment that a sun-stroke was about to put a period to all my roaming. The sensation was most agonising and most horrible. I had only just sufficient presence of mind left to wave a handkerchief to the dragoman, who, with the rest of our party, was far ahead before I fell out of the saddle quite helpless and insensible. That the dragoman revived me, and that I was afterwards able to accomplish even the small remaining part of that terrible day's journey, are mercies for which I ought ever to be grateful. Had I possessed a pair of coloured spectacles while travelling in Syria, it is certain, from my subsequent experience in hot climates, that much of this acute suffering would have been spared me, and this I beg to throw out by way of a hint to future tourists in Syria and Palestine, or in any other part of the East. The Carmelites, with the most benevolent and charitable intentions, but completely mistaking the nature of my indisposition, dispensed some potent medicine for me, which, instead of working a beneficial change in my condition, reduced me to such a miserable state of debility that I was unable, without assistance, to mount my horse for two days after taking it. But the pure, bracing, and healthy breezes of Carmel soon counteracted these consequences of amateur pharmacy, and the short and peaceful time I passed there did me much good, and made it possible for me to reach my goal.

At Kaiffa we fell in with another party, the members of which I had already become acquainted with; some of them in Beyrout, and others in Cairo. This party comprised a distinguished British officer, whom I shall call Major-General A., with his lady and son, making a digression in the Holy Land on their journey home to England from Tasmania; Mr. B., a well-educated, extensively travelled, and, *mirabile dictu*, agreeable American gentleman from Philadelphia, who spoke in raptures about Sicily, and whose descriptive power fired my imagination to make the ascent of Etna, an achievement which, three months later, I succeeded in accomplishing; the Venerable Archdeacon C., a fine, benevolent old man, journeying, in spite of grey hairs and infirmities, to bring his son, a young officer in the Guards, who was lying dangerously ill in Jerusalem, back to England; Mr. D., a son of the Lord Bishop of E.; Dr. and Mrs. F., reported to be of enormous wealth on the lady's side, who were constantly "my loving" and "my dearing" each

other by day, and whose domestic and matrimonial differences, commencing punctually every evening as soon as they had retired to the privacy of their tent, were prolonged far into the watches of the night, and always rose, by a gradual scale of ascension, to the pitch of a tropical hurricane before they subsided; Miss G., a young lady with the patience of Job, and with the disposition of an angel (both of which must have been put, in those days, to an almost crucial test), whose rare good fortune it was to be travelling in the pursuit of pleasure under the auspices and protection of this delightful married couple; and a Rev. Mr. H., the handsome, mustachoeed, and lisping curate of a fashionable district in London, with an elegant and voluptuous habit of dropping all his R's, and of exchanging them for W's, with a pretty talent for drawing in water-colours, and, according to certain members of our party, with an unreciprocated *penchant* for Miss G. But let me not forget to mention the four over-educated citizens of New York, who gratuitously favoured us with their society, and who pleasantly beguiled the tedium of travel by lecturing their enslaved and down-trodden European companions upon the moral grandeur and upon the political stability of the Union. One of these prescient philosophers, probing futurity, *calculated* that "God Almighty's great American Republic" would "endure, in its integrity and independence, unto the end of all time;" and, by the way, not the least striking of the multiplied and multiform idiosyncrasies, for which these four young gentlemen were remarkable, was the surprising talent they exhibited in the art of expectorating sideways out of the corners of their mouths, which were rarely unplugged, even at meal time; by reason whereof, when we all rode abreast of each other in a phalanx, as was often the case, the interesting young fellows in question might have been compared to as many Yankee ships of war, discharging shots at rapid intervals across an enemy's bow to bring her to. I several times observed that the ladies of our party reined in their horses with appalling abruptness and precipitation, in order to lodge the sidelong shots that flew from these salivary sail-of-the-line; and truth compels me to add, with an involuntary shudder, that neither the ladies themselves nor their horses were always quick enough in their manœuvres to baffle such exceeding sharp practice.

The dragomen having warned us that this part of the country had been much infested of late by bands of Arab robbers and of plundering Druses, we all agreed to keep together as much as possible until arriving at Joppa. As long as we did this, our cavalcade by day made a formidable appearance, and at night the tents were grouped into a little village, while the angry cadence of the doctor's termagant wife supplied the absence of a mastiff, and

might have been occasionally useful as a caution to any Druse gentlemen, on rapine and plunder bent, who hoped to surprise a sleeping population.

From Mount Carmel we moved on to Athlit—from Athlit to Tentura—from Tentura to Cæsarea—Palestina—from Cæsarea to El Haram—and from El Haram to Joppa, where the danger ceased, and where we separated from our friends whom we met at Kaiffa. We parted from the A.'s with regret. The major-general was a fine, shifty, courteous, high-bred, strikingly handsome soldier—the soul of enterprise, in the prime of manhood; he had seen a great deal of hard service in India, in China, and elsewhere, and had travelled nearly all the world over. His lady, the most active and intrepid of her sex I ever met, was among the number of our heroic countrywomen that had survived some of the worst horrors of the Indian rebellion. She had accompanied her husband in all his campaigns, and was in every essential worthy of him. From Joppa we travelled on to Beit-Dejâu—from Beit-Dejâu to Ramleh—from Ramleh to Latron—from Latron to Kuryet-el-Enab (the Kirjath-Jearim of Scripture)—from Kuryet-el-Enab to Kolonich—and from Kolonich to Jerusalem. It took us eight days from the morning we left Beyrout to accomplish the whole of this intensely interesting, but in my then state of health, to me, very trying journey, being from seven to nine hours each day in the saddle. I had every reason to be satisfied with Leonidas, the dragoman, and with my horse, a beautiful little Arab, which, when I chose, flew over the ground like the wind; but what with the all-powerful sun of Syria, and with the *Hampseen*, which, after traversing vast tracts of dry and desert land, blew upon us like a blast from a furnace for four consecutive days without intermission, pleasure to me became too often quite out of the question, and, in mitigation of my torments, I was compelled to ride with linen bandages round my head; these I moistened at every place I passed where water was to be obtained. At Cæsarea, formerly the proud city of Herod the Magnificent, now an utterly forsaken and ghastly pile of granite ruins, stretching far out into the sea, we were in imminent danger of being attacked by a gang of marauding Bedouins, which had surprised some German tourists and stripped them of all they possessed, even to the clothing on their backs, but a few days previously, and at Tentura we narrowly escaped the same misadventure. For these two reasons, having also several times heard that the Druse population in Syria were ill-affected to the Christians, and that little dependence could be placed on the apparently tranquil state of the country, we determined not to pursue our travels beyond the walls of the Holy City, before we had memorialised the authorities for an escort.*

* The Druse massacre of the Christians in Syria, commenced a few weeks later.

What a wearisome and laborious ride is that from Joppa to Jerusalem! Although it extends over little more than six and thirty geographical miles, it is often so rugged—there are such tremendously steep gradients, and the bridle-path is so inconceivably wretched, that to the traveller it seems twice the distance. Tourists usually make two days' journey of it, sleeping at Ramleh (Arimathea)—a dusty and dismal village, situated about half-way, where one is pretty certain to be cruelly blotted by mosquitoes, and to be phrensied at night by the incessant croaking of the frogs. The only attractive object at Ramleh is a tower, which rises in the midst of a cluster of small white houses, like a tall and graceful lady surrounded by her pages, and fixes the traveller's attention a long time ere he arrives at the place itself. Let every tourist ascend the tower; for they cannot but be transported who gaze upon the solemn and resplendent panorama that stretches far and wide around it. The principal places of interest in this part of the journey are Lydda, where the ruins are to be seen of a Christian church, built by Richard Cœur de Lion, the exquisite beauty and symmetry of which are reminiscential of Tintern; and the valley of Ajalon, where Joshua commanded the moon to stand still until he had smitten the Amorites—

“Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon,
And thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon.”—*Joshua* x. 1, 2.

Immediately after traversing this fine level plain, surrounded by a chain of severe and shaggy mountains, the rough and toilsome part of the ride commences, and the traveller must wander for hours in precipitous glades and wild stony ravines—'mong savage rocks, and almost impossible passes, before he is rewarded with a first glimpse of the most essentially impressive sight the world can show—the city of Jerusalem.

And now for a few words as to the romance of Nomadic life in Syria. If the romance of such an existence is attractive to an Englishman for a short period, it is also set-off by a variety of *petites misères*, escape from which there is none, and to which I found it impossible to be callous. Neither threats nor promises, for example, can induce the Ishmaels of your escort to leave off trolling and droning their execrable ballads close under your tent at night. As long as the embers are smouldering round which they squat, (often until two o'clock in the morning) so long will they surely continue, either singing or quarrelling. They seem to take a sort of savage pleasure in the destruction of whatever slight chance of sleep the mosquitoes and insect *et cæteras* may vouchsafe to your weary eyelids. Even when the flimsy gauze curtains that protect your couch are luckily without the smallest rent (for it seemed to me that a mosquito could force its entrance through holes not very

much bigger than the eye of a needle)—even when you have thoroughly well peppered your sheets and your coverlet with snuff, and by such means slain your other nocturnal foes, and even after your Arab tormentors have at last sung themselves to sleep, you are still serenaded by the hoarse croaking chorus of a thousand Syrian frogs, which never ceases from sundown till sunrise, and is music that must be heard in this part of the world to be properly appreciated. Sometimes, also, our steeds broke loose, and stumbled against the tents in the night. Once, while I was wrapped in a peaceful slumber, a horse's hoof, penetrating the canvas, kicked my bed over, and sent me sprawling to the ground, which was rather sensational. The great plain of Sharon and the plain of Esdraelon, swarm with prowling Bedouin proletarians, who have the highest respect for the lives and property of well-armed travellers. Tourists in every part of Palestine will find it a convenient and wholesome practice to discharge their revolvers at nightfall. It is a compliment to the Arabs, and it also conveys a delicate admonition, the meaning of which their sagacity will not fail to penetrate. At Athlit, however, and in spite of such precautions, my horse was cleverly stolen at midnight by an Arab, whom Leonidas, with some assistance and a vast deal of trouble, caught late in the following evening, and brought up to my tent, together with the stolen steed. To frighten the thief into contrition for his felony, I held a loaded revolver to his head, while he sued on his knees for mercy. I let the rascal off much more cheaply than he deserved, and gave orders that he should be chastised after a picturesque fashion described in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," and which, being thus strictly in accordance with Oriental prescription, was not, I presume, an outrage upon his national vanity; that is to say—three Arabs held him down to the ground, while a fourth administered a few dozen vigorous lashes with a horsewhip to the soles of his feet. I think it extremely improbable that the culprit purloined any more horses for a considerable time after. With regard to food; though there is little variety, the articles of daily consumption being almost limited to fowls and eggs, egg-*omelettes*, oranges, and bread, your dragoman, who is also your *chef-de-cuisine*, rarely gives you cause for complaint. He is generally an artist in the Italian school of gastronomy; displaying, however, an especial and very particular talent for cooking fowls—edible birds, which he can and does disguise with such consummate skill, and with such astonishing versatility, that if an alderman or common-councilman, travelling in Syria, were to dine off them half-a-dozen successive days, he might be deceived into the belief that his dragoman served him up a dish each day, which possessed the attraction of complete novelty to recommend it. It may be fairly affirmed that the Syrian drago-

man's expertness and cunning in his culinary transformation of poultry amounts to genius; and, by the way, a delicacy of preserved apricots, called *mish-mish*, which he is certain to place every morning on your breakfast-table, besides being delicious, is, in that climate, particularly wholesome. Coffee, conversation, and a *nargilly*, should follow each meal, and having after supper posted-up your brief chronicle of the day's transactions, a rubber of whist, or game of loo, and two or three more pipes of Latakiah, will bring every evening to a tranquil and delightful end.

Nothing could exceed my delight at everything I saw in Jerusalem, although my old enemy, the sun, glaring fiercely all day upon white walls and flat roofs, still greatly distressed me. At the pilgrim's approach to the city, and as the site of the single theocracy the world ever knew opens up before him,—a theocracy that was the parent of so many immortal names, destined still to be great when the heroes and heroines of pagan antiquity are forgotten,—he looks around him at the valleys, at the surrounding hills, and at the Jordan, for ever consecrated by the warriors, prophets, and kings of Israel, of whose virtues he thinks with reverence, and over whose very faults it is hard to ponder without compassion, but, alas! "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces." Admirably does an illustrious British author, orator, and statesman, himself descended from a long line of Jewish ancestors, described Jerusalem as a city of stone in a land of iron, with a sky of brass. As the traveller paces those streets, once majestic, now disfigured by abject, squalid, starving poverty, but still inspiring awe, he feels the irresistible genius of the place working in his soul; his memory teems with devout traditions, and his heart, if it be not of flint, swells with faith, and reverence, and patriotism, and piety—virtues that seem to spring from the very soil, and to flow spontaneously from the climate, so generally do they pervade the ineffable period of its sacred history. I have noticed, too, that the major portion of the European visitors seem little inclined to court each other's society or conversation while they remain on this renowned spot of earth, but that, yielding to some obscure, to some mystic and secret influence, they prefer to rove about the city and its environs, silent, solitary, and absorbed, as though fascinated by a *reverie*, and as if lost in a vision of entranced rapture. But Jerusalem, setting aside its thousand and one charms of reminiscence and association, is to me, even then, a most wonderful city. As I stood one morning upon the crest of Olivet, and gazed upon the prospect before me, with emotions which I could not then repress, and which I do not now disguise, so many claims has that prospect to our homage, so

many holds has it upon our best passions, it seemed to me difficult, perhaps impossible, for man to find a better site for a splendid and fortified city. Engineers have declared that if properly strengthened, garrisoned, and mounted with cannon, its defences natural and artificial would be such, that except by investing it, and by the starvation of its defenders, this devoted stronghold, although it has been thrice laid on heaps, and although the plough has furrowed over and over again the earth that was covered by its marble palaces, and its gilded temple, like St. Jean D'Acre, might mock the efforts of a modern enemy to subdue it, if every other hostile resource that the skill of the besiegers could devise were employed against it; and notwithstanding blank walls and dull portals meet the eye everywhere, there is, believe me, a certain subtle and incomprehensible charm pervading the scene, which robs it of half its desolation, and fills the mind, I know not how, with confidence that Jerusalem, queen of cities, will arise again, that Zion will be covered, as of old, with palaces, and that Moriah will be crowned once more with its ancient glory. These may be dreams, or the fruit of an exuberant fancy, and it is easy to sneer; but if you yourself, reader, ever stand there, where I stood, I am satisfied that your own impressions, in spite of you, will assume some such shape.

It is no purpose of mine to enter with any minuteness here upon the description of a city which has been the theme of a thousand pens in every living language; but, with regard to one and perhaps the cardinal object of attraction, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, I must observe that I share the impression of a large majority of writers upon the subject, who have pronounced the whole thing to be a pious fraud, and who declare that the situation of Calvary must be sought without, and not within, the city walls. The pilgrims' fervent enthusiasm and credulity must be remarkable indeed who can suppose that the scenes of so many incidents recorded in the New Testament, which, "with a highly romantic violation of the unity of place," are alleged to be grouped together under the roof of that extraordinary museum of sacred curiosities, could be really comprised within a compass so absurdly small; and the Empress Helena, to whom this courageous invention is ascribed, together with the discovery of the true cross, was a saintly personage, whose good fortune must have been, to a considerable extent, abetted by a most rare and felicitous ingenuity. The fact is that human folly has never been pushed to a more extravagant length than it was by the Crusaders, who sacrificed a hundred thousand lives to acquire precarious possession of a certain cave, described to them in some loose and antiquated traditions, as the sepulchre of the Founder of Christianity—traditions unsupported by a semblance of proof—traditions which, at the present day, would in England be called

folk-lore, and which time, history, and science, those three ruthless disenchanters, will probably pronounce to be mere romance. Recollecting, however, that this singular edifice, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, is revered by so many millions of mankind as the most sacred fane in Christendom, it is indeed difficult to conceive how any civilised stranger can behold, without a feeling of profound melancholy, the hideous spectacle of mummery and fanaticism which is exhibited there on Good Friday. A very few years ago, all the pent-up hatred—all the hoarded rancour and malice subsisting in Jerusalem between the Greek and Latin priesthood, burst forth on this anniversary, and under this roof, into an open and scandalous riot: bones were broken, blood was spilt, and something similar to a revival of the old struggles in the Temple, between the factious followers of John and Simon, was then, as it had been often before, witnessed. Even now, the *odium theologicum*, and the still rankling animosity of the rival churches in the Holy City, are but too plainly made manifest by the Pacha's precautions for coercing the votaries of each into an observance of the peace. During the progress of the pageant on Good Friday, Mussulman soldiers, with bayonets fixed, are by his command stationed in various parts of the building, to deter these lambs of Christ from laying violent hands on each other; and should the day terminate with nothing more serious than its usual accompaniment of unseemly wrangling, it is a subject of joy and congratulation to every peaceably disposed Christian present.

Being the bearer of some sealed despatches for Monsignore Buonaventura da Solero, a dignitary at the Latin convent, addressed to him by the venerable Commendatore Caprioli of Naples, who, though himself an ecclesiastic, had filled high offices in the Neapolitan government, under two sovereigns, viz., that of Secretary of State, under Francis I., and of President of the Council under Ferdinand II., otherwise "King Bomba" of happy memory,—I presented myself, in company with my American fellow-traveller, at the door of the establishment, mindful to fulfil a mission with which I was entrusted by a distinguished man, who had shown me some condescension and kindness in a far-distant land.

We were ushered into a large and even handsome reception-room, whereof the walls were embellished with full-length, life-size, and exceedingly well-painted portraits in oil of their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of the French, which, it may be presumed, were imperial gifts to the convent. Here, before the good father made his appearance, sweetmeats and liqueurs were served to us on a silver salver—a compliment to foreign visitors that obtains (barring the salver), not only in Jerusalem, but in all the monasteries of the Levant, and of Mount Athos, and in nearly every religious

house throughout the East. The holy father was then announced, to whom, after a little preliminary confabulation, I delivered the commendatore's bulky packet of letters. He lavished upon me a profusion of thanks, and then began eagerly to read them. When more than half an hour had been consumed in this way, he suddenly put the papers aside, and plied me with so many questions in French about the Pope, that I conclude he mistook me for one who had basked all his life in pontifical smiles, and who had been reared from his infancy in the Vatican. I soon got tired of this; but it was a considerable time before the pious interrogator who thus catechised me perceived that my information touching the Pope's political position and private life, and concerning his friends, his favourites, and his enemies, was, on the whole, unsatisfactory, not to say scanty, compared to what might have been expected from one who had moved, as he seemed to fancy, so constantly about the Papal Court. This discovery happily made, the good father, at last tired of the subject as well as myself, and changing the conversation, pressed us to take up our quarters in the convent. Upon finding, however, that in such case we should be expected to conform to certain stringent conventual rules, and to keep the conventual hours, we politely declined to accept his reverence's hospitality, and procured accommodation, much more to our liking, at Hauser's Hotel, in Christian-street, at the brink of the pool of Hezekiah.

Although we were tolerably comfortable in this uncouth hostelry, I cannot conscientiously recommend it to travellers who are invalids, as the bedrooms—nearly all on the water side of the house—strike chill and damp when the thermometer is at ninety degrees in the shade. Simeon's Hotel, on Mount Zion, has a superior table to Hauser's, certainly, and that, be it understood, is not saying over-much in its praise; but it is built on a healthier site. After all, perhaps, the best hotel to patronise during a visit to Jerusalem is one's own tent.

We found about a dozen tourists at Hauser's, every one of whom nursed his own pet archæological and polemical crotchet, which he seldom missed an opportunity to assert, and which I verily believe the most inexorable logic, adorned with extraordinary eloquence, and enforced by a Demosthenes, could neither have destroyed nor disturbed. I have said elsewhere that social intercourse did not flourish between the strangers who happened to visit Jerusalem at the time I was there, and that my fellow pilgrims in the Holy City were, for the most part, isolated, rather than gregarious—howbeit, I intended that this remark should only apply to strangers while they were actively employed out of doors in examining the antiquities, and in solving, or ostensibly endeavouring to solve, the mysteries of modern Jerusalem; for the same people

who might have been seen silently flitting by day about the city and its neighbourhood, as if only half-conscious of their own existence, much less disposed to recognise that of their neighbours, became wonderfully garrulous and combative when, the day's rambles being over, they sat down to the evening meal at their hotel. No city in the wide world furnishes casuistry with so many and such attractively controvertible topics as Jerusalem. The very atmosphere of Hauser's, for example, seemed to develope in all of us an irresistible propensity to chop logic and to cavil, and, of a consequence, the table-talk there was dashed with a spirit of contention which ran high or low, in proportion to the various degrees of warmth or coolness in the temperament of those by whom it was indulged. It must be confessed that this sort of thing *did sometimes* run inconveniently high, and that, on more than one occasion, it interrupted the harmony and good-fellowship so desirable among men of opposite creeds and of varied nationalities who are accidentally thrown together in any part of the world, and in the common pursuit of pleasure. Never, not even at *nisi prius*, have I been so forcibly struck as in Jerusalem with the importance in argument of tempering one's firmness and precision with vigilance and forbearance. It is with argument as in life generally—if you discover to Brown that you fancy yourself at enmity with him, Brown, in his turn, will be pretty sure to give evidence that he fancies himself at loggerheads with you; but only make it apparent that you give him credit for friendly intentions, and, in nine cases out of ten, he will meet you in a corresponding spirit of good faith. I will merely add that this golden rule was too often forgotten by some of the post-prandial wranglers at our hotel in Jerusalem.

The Latin Easter and the Jewish Passover, usually follow close upon each other, and are sometimes even contemporaneous. Having ascertained that the latter had not expired, and that it had still three days to run, I sought and obtained an introduction to an Israelite, whose grandfather and great-grandfather had been born in Jerusalem; and I called in the evening at his house, hoping to surprise him and his family in the act of celebrating those rites, which, preserving as they do, the memory of a stupendous miracle that shaped the destiny of the world, are hallowed almost equally to the Jew and to the Gentile. Such phrases as "eastern magnificence," "oriental splendour," and the like, which are so familiar in Frankish mouths, certainly could not apply to *his* domicile; for though I knew him to be a man of more than moderate means, his instinct, and perhaps his experience also, had taught him the danger of exciting the cupidity of his rulers and of his neighbours, by indulging any passion that he might possess for external display. Therefore this Hebrew, born and bred in the city of his ancestors,

wealthy too, according to the scale of private fortunes in Palestine, and haply with the blue blood of Abraham coursing through his veins, dwelt in a house built half-way up a narrow and crooked lane, its principal front presenting a dead wall, only relieved by the door; while at the side, the smallest imaginable window peeped distrustfully askance at the approaching stranger, and seemed to be perpetually on the *qui vive*!

Again and again did I rap with my stick at his door before it was partly and gingerly opened, and I was able to slip the card of introduction a missionary had given me into the hand, which at my request was thrust out to receive it. The owner of the hand (a very dirty one) was a youth whose excessive caution, as soon as he perceived my Frank dress, seemed to vanish. Him I followed into a small but comfortable chamber, with a divan of crimson velvet on three sides of it, much worn, and a vaulted roof perforated for ventilation, despite which the air was heavy with the fragrance of the pipe—the ever-present and ever-grateful pipe of the Oriental; and to the British tourist who has once breathed the dreamy, balmy, poetical, paradisaical perfume of thine incomparable leaf, O Latakiah! how vulgarly strikes the provincial odour of Wills! how hatefully reeks in his shrinking nostrils the slang metropolitan redolence of shag and of bird's-eye! how suggestive to him of a pot-house and of carousing cabmen is the rising aroma of Dutch-cut, Virginia returns, and even of honey-dew!

The Israelite, a middle-aged man, was calmly and contemplatively smoking Latakiah through water when I entered his presence; and my mind misgives me if the missionary, at whose card he glanced with an eloquent shrug of his shoulders, and a very expressive elevation of his arched eyebrows, had not found in him a perfectly unimpressible subject. His hair was yellow, and his complexion florid. His daughter, a damsel of sixteen or eighteen years, resembled him in both those particulars, and was fair to look at. Her eyes were blue, almond-shaped, and languishing; the lids, fringed with long lashes, slightly drooping; her nose straight as a Greek's; her mouth a veritable Cupid's bow; her teeth dazzling; her figure unexceptionable. In truth, the Syrian costume she wore, however *piquant* and picturesque, with its provoking little jacket, and however handsome with its profusion of lace and embroidery, seem misplaced upon the tall, comely, undulating form of this Hebrew girl, who, in the European ball-dress, might have passed muster at Almack's for one of the patrician maids of merrie England. She too smoked through a tube of many coils, tipped with amber, which at my approach she took from her lips, and rising from her divan silently placed in my hands, and which I as silently accepted, but with a bow, profound enough, let

me hope, to have suggested my full appreciation, at once of her courtesy and of her attractions.

Some cakes of unleavened bread, together with a salad of herbs and a jar of wine, still remaining upon a table, which was covered with a cloth of spotless purity, gave evidence of the Passover; but I regretted to find that the family supper and its concomitant prayers had been already despatched. Nor was this my worst disappointment; for while I stood anxiously considering in what language I should break a romantic if awkward silence, which followed my acceptance of the young Jewess's pipe, her father, to my infinite surprise and disenchantment, addressing me in prosaic English, begged me to be seated, protested that he was delighted to see me, and assured me that however widely it might be his misfortune to differ in religious views from our common acquaintance, the missionary, to whose persevering instruction he was indebted for his knowledge of my mother-tongue, the reverend gentleman or any of his friends were always welcome under his humble roof; and then he asked me to take wine with him. This was a blow; but it struck me as a decisive proof of two things. One that the Anglo-Saxon people have hunted the very shadow of a shade of romance from this world; and the other, that it must be easier far to initiate a Jerusalem Jew into the mysteries and beauties of the English language than to convert him to those of Christianity.

Long and earnestly we talked together, and I discovered, to my agreeable surprise, that his opinions of men and things were by no means those of a being whose intelligence and whose strong instinctive common sense had been stifled under a spiritual despotism. Still more was I pleased and astonished to meet with accurate information, even upon questions of the day, in a quarter where there were such scanty means of obtaining it. If he spoke derisively of the somewhat theatrical performances enacted on Good Friday, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, he appeared, on the other hand, to be wholly exempt from that blind devotion to the superstitious niceties of the ancient faith usually ascribed to its children in Jerusalem; and more than once he broadly hinted at the necessity which existed for reforming the discipline of his own Church. He dwelt, too, with great reverence and enthusiasm, upon the pious labours, and upon the peaceful triumphs of Sir Moses Montefiore, the philanthropist, whom he declared to be "the best and most actively benevolent man in Israel"—a reputation which has been ungrudgingly bestowed upon the aged baronet by Christians as well as by Jews, all the world over. But the subject which he discussed with the most animation was the oppressive conduct of the Turkish authorities, and particularly their altogether abominable practice of

permitting Frank tourists to intrude (Fridays) upon the privacy of Hebrew mourners at the Wailing-place. "For myself," he said, with intense bitterness, "I have long since ceased to pray there. I found it quite impossible to keep my thoughts fixed on sacred things while an inquisitive and chattering rabble of Franks exchanged their stupid comments, and sometimes indulged their miserable mirth at our expense. There is a God of justice and of vengeance!" added he. "We are living witnesses to the truth of it, and who shall say but that the day may come when Frankish tears, like ours, shall not avail, and when the sacred privacy of the Frenchman or the Englishman, mourning over the desolation of his country's capital, shall be as liable to the hateful encroachment of the stranger and of the foreigner as our own?" My Hebrew entertainer waxed so eloquent, his room was so comfortable, the situation so novel, and the pipes which his charming blue-eyed girl many times replenished for me were so delicious, that I was surprised, and not exceedingly well-pleased either, when the midnight hour warned me against wearing out my welcome. "We depart at sunrise for Bethlehem, on a visit of three months to my brother, who dwells there. You will call and see us again when we return to Jerusalem: we shall expect you." And as I rose to take my leave, this invitation to me from the father was gracefully seconded by his daughter. Alas! another week, and I bade a long adieu to the humbled "City of the Great King." Another month, and I had quitted the thirsty land of Judæa for ever.

ON THE MOUNTAIN

URGING hillward from the valley,
 Chasing off the sunset light,
 Comes the whistling breath of night,
 Come the stormlets, mad to fight
 With the pine-ranks, as they rally
 On the mountain,
 Where I'm wont to sit and listen,
 And in listening comfort find,
 To the rushing of the waters, and the roaring of the wind.
 Lonely, through long days of childhood,
 Have I sat and listened here ;
 As reverberated clear
 Sullen wave-wash in the mere.
 Oh that lonely, chilly childhood,
 On the mountain !
 How I used to listen, listen,
 By our cottage over-vined,
 To the straining of the pine-tops, and the moaning of the wind.
 Lonely, but not always lonely,
 Chilly, not for ever chill,
 For across our dreary hill,
 While there brooded painful still,
 Still that boded awful storm wars,
 On the mountain,
 Came a traveller, as I listened,
 Listened both with ear and mind,
 To the gurgling of the waters, and the sighing of the wind.
 Tired, he rested at our homestead,
 Where they knew not how to love.
 As within their hearts I strove
 Rest to find, like Noah's dove,
 Finding not it in our homestead
 On the mountain ;
 For they hated me to listen,
 Where with stars the vault was lined,
 To the surging of the waters, and the raging of the wind.
 Many days that stranger tarried,
 Stranger now no longer, he,
 Ever in my company,
 Wandered over hill and lea ;

ON THE MOUNTAIN

Over furze and heath we hurried,
 On the mountain ;
 And we both would rest and listen,
 On some sunny spot assigned,
 To the music of the waters, and the rev'lling of the wind.

Then there came the old, old story,
 Told beneath a darkening cloud,
 As the thunder grumbled loud,
 Like remonstrance from a crowd.
 Then he told the old love story
 On the mountain.
 I believed him as I listened,
 Innocent, confiding, blind,
 'Midst the grumbling of the thunders, and the shrieking of the
 wind.

* * * *

Yes, he left me here—he left me !
 Left me here to weep and die,
 'Neath an alway scowling sky,
 With no consolation nigh.
 Yes, the fair-haired traveller left me
 On the mountain.
 And my heart bleeds as I listen
 (Yet they tell me Heaven is kind)
 To the laughter of the waters, and the mocking of the wind.
 So, when rush the night-winds howling,
 I am bending to the blast,
 All my golden hope-dream past,
 All my future overcast
 With deep darkness. Storms are growling
 On the mountain.
 This is why I sit and listen,
 Broken heart and humble mind,
 To the rushing of the waters, and the roaring of the wind.

WILLIAM MACKAY.



WAVERNEY COURT

CHAPTER XV.

AN INVITATION TO WAVERNEY.

WE are happily constituted by Providence to get over our troubles and even the sorrows which we fancy will bear us down. If you are the father or the mother of a family, and have one—a little cherub, with blue eyes and blushing pink cheeks—have not you, when the thought that the little one might *die*—have not you dismissed that thought with a shudder, as being more than you dare contemplate, even as a possible event? And yet,—there, I don't want to hurt your fine feelings, so you need not, my dear madam, turn from me with horror and disgust; but yet—candidly now—after the crape bonnet has been stowed away in the band-box, and after the closed blinds have been drawn up, haven't you been able to get on with your daily work much the same as usual? and, saving the sentiment which you talk and no doubt feel, in moments of melancholy with your dear female friends, has your life really been as embittered as you at first expected it would be? Do you never smile now as well as weep? Has existence really no charm left for you now? Do you think less of the new baby when it comes, or are you less cheerful at its childish prattle, because its little sister with the pink cheeks and blue eyes is an angel in heaven with silver wings?

My dear sir, I am perfectly aware that the gushing Amelia of seventeen, with the glossy black ringlets (which mamma used to put into nightly curl-papers with her own fair hands for your especial behoof and admiration)—Amelia, with the dancing black eyes, and to whom you used to sing “You'll remember me” so pathetically—treated you very badly—jilted you, in fact, for that abominable captain, even when the wedding-ring was bought and the day named. I know, also—you needn't blush and deny it,

because neither blushes nor fibs become you at *your* time of life—I know, also, I say, that after the above sad event you were in a very low and desponding state, even for a short time contemplating suicide; but yet, my friend, all this did not prevent your espousing Sophie, your present buxom wife, with whom you have got on very well these intervening years; and although that lady is not standing by to hear you, I am sure, with that jolly red nose of yours, and the corporation you have lately gained, you will not have the audacity to tell me you have been so very wretched and unhappy after all. If my friend is suddenly stricken poor, I shall be very sorry for him; I shall give him my sympathy and best advice in abundance; I shall help him perhaps with what little money I can spare, even though it may cause me a little (but not much) inconvenience to part from it. But then, if people will allow themselves to get into difficulties, what can they expect?

So also did Mr. George Wetherby get over his sorrow. And though the reader has seen him so deeply stricken with the news that poor Emma Evelyn was dead, though the emotion he exhibited upon that occasion was no false sham, but a genuine ebullition of the grief he felt, he was sufficiently recovered a few days afterwards, to enjoy a little more fishing; nor did he, I am sorry to say, thenceforth entirely cease to frequent the Argyll Rooms, nor relinquish the *al-fresco* pleasures of Cremorne.

A month or six weeks had elapsed since the Reverend Andrew Evelyn had paid his visit to his nephew at Fig-tree-court, when the latter, one August morning, on which he was suffering from a splitting head-ache (he had been up late the night before, and the champagne had left him a decidedly real pain about the temples), perceived among his letters one bearing the Waverney post-mark, and addressed to him in the Rector's well-known hand. Having leisurely satisfied himself as to the contents of the others, particularly the pink-tinted ones in the narrow envelopes (some of which, by-the-bye, were not written in the most elegant of calligraphy), he opened this. It was not a long letter, and ran as follows:—

“Rectory, Waverney, August 16th, 1862.

“MY DEAR GEORGE,—We have all been wondering at not having seen anything of you, but presume you have been “too busy in Scotland” or elsewhere, to think much about the old folks at Waverney. We often think of you, and should be very glad to see you down here these fine days—the corn is now in many places being cut, and that which is still standing is magnificent—if you could make yourself comfortable with our quiet ways for a week or a fortnight, or as long, my dear boy, as you please, and the longer the better. As you are such a devoted follower of

Iznak Walton, I can at least promise you plenty of amusement so far, since the fishing down here is, as you know, famous. I can also promise you, my dear boy, what is of still more consequence—a hearty welcome for yourself, and any friend if you like to bring one with you. Your aunt and Grace unite with me in love, and believe me, dear George, your affectionate uncle,

ANDREW EVELYN.

“To George Wetherby, Esq., Fig-tree-court, Temple.”

Wetherby took a stride to the window, looked out at the various craft floating upon the river, whistled the “Shadow Dance” from “Dinorah,” and flung himself again into his seat.

“The dear old fellow!” he cried, “to think so much about such an ungrateful beggar as I am! I’m dashed if I don’t run down to see them! Let’s see: I’ve promised to take a party to Richmond on Tuesday—yes, I’ll go down on Wednesday next, if it’s only to stay for a couple of days. But when I once get amongst them at Waverney, I’ll be hanged if I don’t feel a deuced bit happier than I do knocking about town. Not but what it is very different now from what it used to be,” he added, sentimentally; “but”—and here he heaved a terrific sigh—“never mind; here goes!”

Saying which, he seized a pen, dipped it into the ink, and wrote off a short reply to the Rector to that effect. Having finished his breakfast, and written one or two other letters, he put on his hat, and took them to the post-office himself. His letters being posted, and his mind rendered easy by the knowledge that before he had quitted Fig-tree-court he had stuck up a notice that he would “return at 12 o’clock,” he was in no particular hurry to get back again to that ancient and dingy locality. He thought he would take a stroll westward. He had one or two little purchases to make in Regent-street, so thither he bent his steps; in fact, he thought he would buy his Cousin Grace some trifling present to take down to Waverney with him, and which would be none the less pleasing to her because unexpected. As, however, he was turning up the Haymarket, he perceived a tall, military, and though dusky-complexioned, good-natured-looking individual, standing at the corner of the road. This gentleman was apparently known to him, as he came to a sudden halt, turned back, and saluted him with a hearty slap on the shoulder.

“What may it be that His Royal Highness the Honourable Lieutenant Dent can be gazing at in Pall-mall, and in such a brown study that he suffers his friends to pass him unrecognised?” he cried, good-humouredly.

“Hulloa, Wetherby, is that you?”

“My dear sir, I have every reason to believe so,” replied George, with *nonchalance*.

The other (who was no other than the same Lieutenant Dent who, as will be recollected, appeared a short time back as a member of the New Parthenon) laughed, and shook the *soi-disant* lawyer heartily by the hand.

"*Mon ami!*" said he, "*je suis ravi de vous voir*. Your companionship is quite a windfall to me. To tell the truth, I was so hard up for a comrade that I was half inclined to punch one of yonder cabbys' heads just that I might have the satisfaction of a little amicable quarrelling with him afterwards. There is no one at the New Parthenon this morning but two or three snuffy old fogies as deaf as so many posts, and not quite as companionable. When I inform you that old Colonel Browne, of the Bengal Prancers, is about the most amusing and liveliest fellow of the lot, you will understand, my dear fellow, that I was gazing up Pall-mall, contemplating the Club, and blessing my stars at the lucky escape I have had through seeing the prosy old beggar's head through the window."

"Fortunate youth, I congratulate you! Whither shall your present sympathising friend conduct you, in order that your drooping spirits may be revived?"

"Where you will, so you take me from the scene of my almost utter collapse. A walk, if you please, until I can collect my scattered thoughts. Shall it be so? *Tres-bien. Allons, donc!*"

Whereupon the two gentlemen, with a lazy air, strolled away towards Regent-street forthwith.

"By the way, Wetherby," said Dent, presently, "what are you going to do with yourself next week? The governor has been writing up to me from Coventry to ask me to run down home for a week or two. I expect my regiment will be ordered on foreign service shortly, and so I can't well debar the worthy gentleman a last look at his dutiful son. It will be rather slow down there by myself; I wish I could persuade you to accompany me."

"Next week, I think you said?" said George, shaking his head.

"It can be made the week after, if that suits you better, and you'll come?"

Wetherby stroked his chin, and seemed to consider.

"I would accept your invitation, Dent, with pleasure," he said, "but the fact is, by a singular coincidence, *my* governor has also been writing to me, asking me to go down for a few days to see *him*. I propose this—if you'll run down to Waverney for two or three days with me, I'll run down to Coventry, for as many days afterwards as you please, with you."

"Do you think you could assure me a welcome, *mon ami*? Your uncle is a clergyman, and he might not be over pleased at

your bringing with you such a military desperado—such a wolf seeking whom he may devour as I am.”

“As to the first objection, here is his letter, in which he invites me to bring with me any friend. As to the second, though my dear old uncle is a clergyman, he is no Puritan, as, when you know him, you will be ready to admit, but the kindest-hearted and jolliest fellow that ever donned a surplice; and as for the rest,” added Wetherby, somewhat sadly, “I wish, Dent, there had never been a worse wolf enter into that dear fold than you are!”

“Then I can’t resist any longer, and I heartily accept the bargain.”

“You will go with me to Waverney?”

“On condition that you go afterwards with me to Coventry.”

“That is agreed.”

“Agreed, then, say I.”

And so the point was settled.

CHAPTER XVI.

A VISIT TO WAVERNEY.

“AND so the Lord Chief Justice of Fig-tree-court has arisen at last!”

And Lieutenant Dent, who uttered the exclamation, laughing gaily, arose from the comfortable easy chair in Mr. George Wetherby’s equally comfortable sitting-room—in which he had been idling away the last half-hour with a newspaper—to shake hands with the latter gentleman, who now made his appearance *en dishabille*, with a pair of fresh polished boots in his hand, which he, apparently, in his hurry had not yet had time to pull on.

“Sorry to have kept you waiting, old boy,” said he.

“Sorry! Oh, you sluggard, I am ashamed of you! It is half-past ten o’clock and a sunlight morning, as the old watchman might say, and here are you just making your first appearance out of bed, while here am I, waiting impatient to get into the country, and almost ready for my dinner when I get there. ‘Tis the voice of the sluggard, I heard him complain;’ how does the old song run?”

“Never you mind how it runs,” returned Wetherby, good humouredly, as he pulled on his boots. “There is another old song, as you call it, I think by the same author, which tells against you men of Mars: ‘Let dogs delight to bark and bite, &c.’ It is all very well for you military fellows, who are used to be drummed to drill at sunrise, to get grumbling at us over-worked civilians, who toil for our living by the light of our midnight oil—”

"Bosh! you toil frightfully by your midnight oil, I know."

"And who do not seek the arms of Morpheus until the time when you, refreshed by your invigorating slumbers, are expecting the bugle to sound the call, and the glorious ——"

"There, there; don't waste any more precious time, man, in making such long-winded orations as these," cried the lieutenant, running over to the window to look at the pleasant Temple Gardens, which, in all the verdant beauty of the bright morning, gave him an exciting stimulus to what was in store for him when he arrived in the heart of Kent.

"I shan't be long now," said George, sitting down to the breakfast which was prepared for him by the deaf housekeeper, and which had been waiting some minutes on the table.

"As short a time as you please, my friend, but I don't want to hurry you."

"I don't mean you should hurry me, whether you want to do so or not," said George, leisurely helping himself to the viands with admirable composure.

"By-the-bye," said Dent, suddenly, "is this place where we are going to—Waverney, I think you said?"

"Quite right, my boy."

"Is this the same Waverney that is in Kent?"

George glanced up with his mouth full of bread-and-butter and sardines.

"The very same," he replied. "But, my dear fellow," he added, as he pulled a chair to the table with his foot, "do let me remind you that we have a long way before us; and that, as you observe you are almost ready for dinner, a second breakfast, or a lunch—it your early habits lead you to prefer the term—will not come very much amiss meanwhile."

"I am not hungry," replied Dent, seating himself, however, "but I will take a cup of coffee, just to keep you in countenance; and I may, at the same time, congratulate you that your exhausting studies by your 'midnight oil,' as you are pleased to remark, do not appear to injure your appetite."

"Not in the slightest degree, my boy; but be good enough to help yourself."

"What made me ask you about this Waverney was, that I have a friend who has some property there."

"Indeed! What is his name? Do I know him?" demanded George.

"Possibly. His name is Lee."

"Do you mean the present, baronet or the late one?"

"The present; Sir Walter Lee is now his title. When I was first acquainted with him he was a captain in the same regiment as

myself. We fought together in the Crimea. You know him, I presume?"

"I have never seen him about town; but I was in his company once or twice about two years ago. My uncle used to be intimate with his uncle. Poor fellow! you saw the account of his murder in the newspaper, I suppose?"

"Yes; but I had a letter from Lee once since, in which he gave me a full account," Dent replied.

"Poor Sir William was a good man, and much respected in the neighbourhood, and by all who knew him, in fact," observed George.

"So I have heard Lee say. He was never tired of sounding his uncle's praises."

"What sort of fellow used you to think he was?" asked Wetherby, carelessly.

Dent laughed.

"Your question is rather obscure, considering how we were talking. Which do you mean, the defunct baronet or the new one? Do you mean my Lee?"

"Of course," replied George, a little peevishly. "I shouldn't ask you about a man I was not aware you had ever seen."

"Well; oh, he was a good enough fellow. The regiment used to like him; and he was certainly as brave as a lion. I have seen him stand, when the Russian bullets have been flying about his ears, as calmly and steadily as though he were playing at cricket."

"Exactly; but what I mean is, as to his private character. I think he used to bear no very high reputation with the quiet folks of Waverney."

The lieutenant smiled grimly, and shrugged his shoulders.

"As to that," he said, "I don't suppose he was immaculate; but then, I strongly suspect, the moral character of even so amiable a gentleman as yourself would scarcely pass scatheless the criticism of the innocent and unsophisticated yokels amongst whom we are about to colonise this afternoon. As for poor Lee, whatever his faults, and they were indeed many, I am inclined to believe that he was sometimes, like King Lear, more sinned against than sinning."

"In what respect?" demanded George, with evident interest.

The lieutenant glanced at the time-piece, and jumped gaily from his seat.

"My dear fellow," he cried, laughingly, "you are staring at me just for all the world as though you expected me to tell you some ghost story. If you have finished your breakfast, do, for goodness sake, make haste and get ready, and let us be off. We have only three-quarters of an hour to get to the station, so I am sure we have no time to lose. What I was going to tell you will keep

very well for the present ; in fact it is nothing at all of importance, but such as it is we will save it until we are safely lodged in the train. Come, now ; I perceive that, you shiftless lawyer, you want me to help you a bit. Have you got your portmanteau packed, and all you want in it? You have? Ye powers, what a marvel! *Eh bien!* while you are polishing off that last touch to that exquisite necktie of yours, I'll be off into the Strand to fetch a cab. See, my friend, that you are ready by the time I am back." So saying, the lieutenant put on his hat, and sauntered out of the door, for the purpose, as he said, of seeking a cab.

George Wetherby was not long in completing his toilet, and was gazing at, and examining with equal satisfaction, a very handsome gold locket when his friend returned, announcing that the cab was waiting for them at the nearest point of Fig-tree-court to which a vehicle of that description could approach.

"What a beauty!" exclaimed the lieutenant, who had entered the room unperceived by its occupant, and who thus caught sight of the locket at which his friend was gazing with such rapture. "For what distinguished member of the *corps de ballet* may it be intended, if the same be not too bold a question to ask?"

"For no member of the *corps de ballet*, sir," replied Wetherby, with a faint blush, "but for my cousin, Grace Evelyn, the most charming girl in the world, and whom, had Lieutenant Dent hesitated in accepting my invitation to accompany me to Waverney, I should have mentioned as a *dernier ressort* of persuasion to settle his wavering mind."

Dent made some appropriate complimentary speech, and everything being now ready, the travelling-bags and hat-boxes were carried to the cab, into which our two friends entered, and were then driven towards London-bridge. They were soon comfortably ensconced within a first-class carriage, and rolling along across the lovely Kentish country on an expedition which was to be fraught with some remarkable events to both of them.

It was a lovely day, and our two friends enjoyed the ride amazingly. How pleasant it is to sit at your ease in a cushioned carriage, with your arms resting indolently in the luxurious bands fashioned to receive them ; to sniff the fresh air, redolent with new mown hay, and the variegated flowers spangling the gardens which you seem to fly over ; to chat pleasantly with a friend the while, and—if no lady is in the carriage, mind you ; nor no lynx-eyed guard to call you to account—to puff your cheroot with all the pomposity of the grand Turk ; and moreover, besides all this, to be conscious that you are speeding whither your heart leads you, at some forty or so miles an hour, without the inconvenience of the jolting and the tumbling about of the swiftest flying coach of other days ; and with

only a remote chance that your *vis-a-vis* may be a murderous tailor, waiting a favourable opportunity to dash your brains out.

What with the ever changing landscape, the houses, warehouses, and manufactories, with their lofty chimnies breathing fire and smoke, gradually disappearing as mighty Babylon was left in the rear, and giving place to trim cottages, the well cultured nursery gardens, the homesteads, the open plains of various hues, from the bright green to the golden brown; the corn-fields, in some of which the reapers were at work, in others the gleaners were, as it were, picking up the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table,—what with all this, I say, and what with very much more which our friends found to admire during their journey, and more especially from the fact that there were several passengers in the carriage with them, thus preventing anything like a confidential *tête-à-tête*, George Wetherby found no opportunity, even had he thought of it, to ask his companion to tell him what he had been going to say anent Sir Walter Lee while they were at breakfast in Fig-tree-court. At length they arrived at Waverney Junction. Our two travellers sprang from the train, crossed the platform, and chatting gaily, took the direction to the Rectory.

"Your appetite, I fear, must by this time be either destroyed by waiting, or in excellent condition for dinner," said George. "You were already looking forward to that meal before we started. I know not what must be the condition of your stomach now."

"Nay, my dear fellow, I feel too much on the *qui vive* to see this charming cousin of yours to care much for my dinner in comparison," laughed Dent. "What did you say her name was?"

"Grace—Grace Evelyn," was the reply.

"Good," cried the young soldier, laughing. "You see my coming down here with you has already so far reformed me, that I like to have *Grace* before dinner. What a romantic name! If ever I write a novel, Grace Evelyn shall be the name of my heroine."

"A heroine she is, and fit for any novel," replied Wetherby, with enthusiasm. "By Apollo, I swear I have read a hundred novels in my time, and she—bless her!—is as like the heroines of ninety-nine of them as two peas in a pod are like unto each other."

"I vow I am almost in love with her already. Is she engaged?"

The young barrister turned upon his interlocutor with a comical smile.

"Really, you now ask me a question which it is utterly impossible for me to answer. If she is not now, I suppose she will be by-and-bye."

Chatting thus the two friends found the ground slip under their

feet very swiftly; and the trudging along the winding country roads, with the shady hedge-rows and the tall lime and chestnut trees to keep off the afternoon sun, was fully as pleasant to our brace of cockney exquisites as the railway riding had been.

"By the way," said Dent, presently, "have you acquainted your relatives that you are going to inflict an additional guest upon them."

Certainly; I wrote there by last night's post, to tell them so; you need not disturb yourself on that point."

"That is all right, then; because you know, George, I shouldn't like to run the risk of having the cold shoulder shown me."

"Never fear it where you are going to *now*," cried the other, cheerily. "I can promise you the very heartiest of welcomes. I am rather surprised, though, that no one has been to meet us," he added, after a pause.

They were now traversing the lane which turned into the high road just below the Rectory, leaving Waverney Court on the left. This lane diverted into a rapid curve, and the hedge-rows, which guarded it on either side, precluded the possibility of anyone in the situation of our travellers seeing more than fifty yards along the road, behind or even before them. But every now and then a glimpse could be caught through the bushes of the spire of Waverney Church, and of the chimney-stacks, and even the windows, flashing in the sun-blaze, of Waverney Court. George Wetherby pointed out the picturesque beauty of the former, and the sight of the latter reminded him of the unfinished conversation between himself and Dent in regard to Sir Walter Lee.

"*Apropos de bottles*," he said, "what were you going to tell me about your friend, the present proprietor of Waverney Court?"

"About young Lee, do you mean?" replied Dent, negligently taking his cigar from his lips, and knocking off the ashes with his little finger.

George nodded, and prepared to listen to the story with evident interest.

"I think I told you," began the lieutenant, "that Lee was with me during the hottest part of the Crimean war. Shortly before that war ended, he received a wound which incapacitated him for the time from further active service. He applied for and obtained leave to return to England. I saw nothing more of him for some years. After the glorious capture of Sebastopol, which put a termination to the war, and when our fellows—such of them, at least, as escaped from the carnage of that campaign—once again set foot in our tight little island, our regiment was ordered into India, where I was occupied in active service during all that fearful mutiny, and until near the end of the year '59. In the spring of

'60, we were ordered home, and not very sorry were most of us when the orders came that we were to embark westward ho !"

"I should think you were not," assented Wetherby, nodding his head.

"We arrived in England about the middle of the year. I hadn't been long in London when I heard of my former comrade in arms, Captain Lee, and soon learnt that whatever the reputation for bravery he had earned in the field, he had been gaining in these intervening years a reputation no less notorious, but not quite so creditable, for his gallantries and 'fast living' about town. He had sold his commission in the army long since. I know he must have become considerably involved in debt, but *that*, however, is not to the point."

"Verily ; let us have the point, and nothing but the point, by all means."

"The first time I saw Lee after my return from India was one morning, when I met him in Regent-street ;—both this cigar, I believe it has gone out again !" He paused a moment to take two or three rapid whiffs, which caused his cheroot to redden almost into a blaze.

"Go on," said Wetherby, greatly interested. "What next ?"

"He had a young and very beautiful girl hanging upon his arm," Dent pursued. "Indeed, to speak candidly, it was the great beauty of the girl which first attracted my attention, as I should most probably not have recognised my former friend in his civilian costume. Instantly I saw his face I recognised him, and you may judge with what unalloyed pleasure I hastened to shake hands with one who had been my companion in so many dangers and perils in the eastern war. Lee appeared as much pleased to see me as I was to see him. But I could not but remark that after the first ebullition of our mutual pleasure and surprise was over that Lee seemed under a strange, and to me mysterious embarrassment. He invited me to visit him at St. John's Wood, where he was living. He spoke in a rapid and rather excited voice, and, in short, seemed very anxious to get rid of me. I was about to wish him good morning, when he, observing me to look rather inquisitively at his beautiful companion—and, to be plain, I had not been able to keep my eyes from her lovely face during all the while we had been conversing——"

But at this juncture of the narration they were interrupted by the sound of footsteps behind them, and a cheery voice hailing George Wetherby by name. Our two friends turned hastily. Two gentlemen had just emerged from behind the curve of the road. One of them was rather stout and short, the other tall and slim. One was trotting along the road like a prancing cob, the other was easily

keeping pace with him by his long and rapid strides. In the former George recognised his uncle, the Rector; in the latter, Dent beheld his former friend, Sir Walter Lee.

"Well, George, I am very pleased to see you again at Waverney—very pleased indeed!" cried the Rector, good nature and hospitality beaming upon his face. "Is this your friend? He is welcome also, heartily, heartily. Permit me, Sir Walter Lee—Eh?"

"We are old comrades in arms, Mr. Evelyn," said Dent, smilingly turning to the Rector, whom he naturally expected would be not a little astonished at beholding his nephew's friend shaking hands quite familiarly with Sir Walter Lee.

"So I have already informed Mr. Evelyn," said Lee, calmly.

"And so much the better, say I," cried the Rector. "I am very glad to hear it, very glad; and I am very glad you have come."

The Rector then explained that he and Sir Walter had been to the station to meet them, but had got there a few minutes after the train had arrived. Knowing that they were late, they had taken the shortest way across the fields; this, therefore, accounted for the two parties not having met. Meanwhile, as the Rector was chatting thus loquaciously to his nephew, Lee, who was looking extremely pale and agitated, seemed very anxious to say something in secret to Lieutenant Dent. One moment, when the others were looking another way, he bent forward to whisper in the lieutenant's ear.

"Do not, for heaven's sake, say a word—about *me*! I will speak to you further by-and-bye."

CHAPTER XVII.

EXPLANATORY.

MEANWHILE it is perhaps necessary that we should give some explanation how it was that Mr. Evelyn was accompanied in the manner described by Sir Walter Lee. For the reader must understand that the day George Wetherby and his friend had chosen for their visit to Waverney was actually the one following that upon which Sir Walter had seen the paragraph in the *Debts* newspaper which had so much discomposed him; and the next day but one subsequent to that gentleman's interview with Grace near the farm, and in which he had so positively expressed his immediate resolution to leave his native land. It may well be supposed that when Grace had quitted Sir Walter after that interview, her little heart was even in a more violently fluttered state than when she first saw him. What Sir Walter had said upon that momentous occasion

was enough, indeed, to perplex and startle any maiden. He had at one moment burst into passionate asseverations of love; he had the next despairingly besought her to forget what he had been saying, since he could not—he *dare* not,—yes, Grace was quite certain he had said he *dare* not,—marry her. What could all this mean? What on earth did he seek her out for, if he had only to tell her how much he loved her—so desperately, indeed, that he was going to run away from England in order to get away from her? Did ever a girl in the full enjoyment of her senses hear of such a ridiculous thing as this, in the nineteenth century, before?

Grace could very well conceive that even so great a personage as Sir Walter Lee might fall in love with her; there was nothing particularly strange in that. But all the rest of it was perfectly incomprehensible. Supposing, now, thought Grace, that she were a man herself, like Sir Walter Lee, and that she had fallen in love with anybody; would she, after she had declared her passion, as Sir Walter had done, would she instantly fly off into a frenzy, and vow that she would run away into some foreign land, and all without waiting even to hear what the young lady had to say in reply? Good gracious, no; that she was very sure she would not; *she* would have gone down upon her knees, if need were, and she would sieze the young lady's hand and kiss it, and then she'd beg, and she'd pray, and vow, and swear, and —.

But just as she got so far in what she would do, and what she would *not* do, were she placed in such an unlikely position, she found herself right upon the threshold of Farmer Smith's door; and as Farmer Smith, and Mrs. Smith, and all the infantile Smiths, closed instantly around her in their boisterous welcome, she could, of course, think no more. And I am afraid that Miss Grace was not quite so particular about the directions her mamma had given her as to the mixture of tar and small beer, as that lady would have approved of, had she known everything. But then it would have done your heart good to have seen the maternal gratitude of Mrs. Smith when she was informed of what Mrs. Evelyn had sent her for the good of her ailing child. And—oh, dear me!—how very wide Master Tommy Smith did open his eyes when he beheld Grace lift the lid of her basket, and produce that large bottle of the nauseous compound; and how very ungrateful he did seem, when his mamma informed him it was for *him*; and it was really shocking the way in which this young gentleman kicked, and spluttered, and yelled, and made wry faces, when a small tea-cup full of the same was administered to him then and there. And although he no doubt derived afterwards considerable benefit from the draught, he looked just then very much as though he would sooner have worms. But when her mission to the farmer was ended, and

when Grace had bidden her homely friends good night, and begun to retrace her way to the Rectory,—when this had happened, I say, her thoughts reverted again into the same channel as before, and she could not get that interview with Sir Walter Lee out of her mind. It appeared almost as though her dream were becoming fulfilled—that portion of it, at least, which associated *her* with the handsome proprietor of Waverney Court.

Grace was very pale when she at length reached home, and when she went into her little room to put away the coquettish mantle and bonnet which she had donned with such care and self-complacency, her hand trembled so much she could hardly untie the strings. And when she found the strings were so unwilling to become untied by fair means she gave them a pull, which, of course, only made things worse, as the said strings got into such a mystifying tangle, or rather knot, that the famous Gordian knot was nothing to it; and then,—in short, what with the obstinate perversities of female attire in general, and the no less intricate perversities to which the loves of young ladies are liable, poor Grace was completely overcome. She could bear up against all these complicated annoyances no longer; so she buried her face—bonnet and all—in the white pillow upon her little bed, and fairly sobbed outright.

When she came downstairs into the parlour, where Mrs. Evelyn—good soul—was knitting a pair of mittens for the curate's mother, her cheeks were still like marble, only that about the eyes they were a trifle redder than usual, and that, I suppose, made up for the bloom that was wanting to her cheeks. However that may have been, the worthy matron certainly did not perceive that there was anything the matter, except that sometimes the girl would shiver, and then she would glance up anxiously through her spectacles and ask if she were cold. Then, when Grace said “no,” Mrs. Evelyn would caution her as to the chilly night, and perhaps inquire about Master Smith and his complaint, or something of that kind. Grace, for her part, being only too glad to be let off so easily, and half dreading a lecture and a dose of some family specific, analogous to the Norway tar and small beer.

Though, however, nothing appeared wrong to Mrs. Evelyn, I am of opinion that the Rector half suspected something, from the nervous and fidgetty way in which he kept peering into his daughter's face, glancing up at her, from the sermon he was composing for the following Sunday. If he did suspect anything, he, however, kept his own counsel, and said never a word to anybody.

Upon the whole, Grace was well content when bed-time came. Not that she wanted to sleep, but that she might enjoy a little undisturbed solitude to gather together her anxious thoughts. And

when at last she sought her pillow (that, you know, is about the most delicate way of putting it when you want to intimate that your heroine got into bed), it was only to continue thinking, and worrying herself in a manner which, for the life of me, I cannot help fancying would have delighted Sir Walter Lee amazingly could he have been aware of it; I know, for my part, how much I should be delighted if I thought any pretty young lady kept awake of a night worrying about *me*—that is, at least, I mean I *should* if I were still a single man.

In the morning very early the Rector was called away from home to attend a dying parishioner. He was consequently absent when the postman came, bringing a letter addressed to him.

“From Cousin George, I think,” said Grace, who took it in.

“Then, depend upon it, he isn’t coming, after all,” cried Mrs. Evelyn, in dismay; “and I’ve been working like a slave, my dear, to get everything just as it used to be in his old room when he was here before, ready for him.”

Grace said she supposed they would know all about it by-and-bye when her father returned, and opened the letter: which was, perhaps, about the most sensible though common-place way of looking at the question.

“I’ve half a mind to open it myself,” returned the worthy lady, taking the epistle in her hand, and scrutinising the direction and the seal longingly. “I hanker after it, my dear—but no, I won’t; for I always think that, though it is quite proper man and wife should keep no secrets from one another, she has no more right to pry into his letters unbeknown to him than he has to ransack her workbox for threads and needles, which is very calculated to mislead one in the finding of things in a hurry, as you’ll know, my dear, when you are married, with a family always wanting new pinafores and stockings darned.”

So it fell out that Mrs. Evelyn did not suffer her feminine curiosity to get the better of her virtue, and her husband’s letter remained unopened upon the table, for the Rector himself to have the pleasure of opening when he should return. And Mrs. Evelyn (perhaps to get out of the way of temptation—a very good expedient, by the way) went off to attend to her own divers domestic affairs.

Now it happened that, while Grace was sitting and working with her needle at the window, the doors of which were standing open, thus making the window almost on a level with the lawn, and while she was sighing every now and then, and wondering to herself what could have made Sir Walter Lee act so strangely to her the other evening, and speculating as to whether he had really gone away from England or not, and if so, whether he would ever come back

any more—who in the world should startle her out of her nineteen senses, by making his appearance so inopportunately, but Sir Walter Lee himself!

Yes, dear reader, I am but recapitulating simple facts. There was Grace at the window, and so intent was she upon her work, and so lost in her day-dreams, that, though she heard the garden-gate give its wonted clang, she never once looked up to see who was coming. Most likely, if she thought about it at all, she supposed it was her father; and I have a notion that young ladies do not always think their fathers are worth much looking after. And, though she heard the rapid footsteps pressing the lawn, she never once raised her eyes. But when at last the sun cast the tall shadow of a man upon her, and when she perceived who the gentleman standing by her side was, then, I say, her work fell from her hands upon the carpet, and the startled girl gave utterance to a stifled scream—such a little musical scream, though, that I cannot think of anything else to compare it with than the sound which I should imagine a nightingale would make if she tried to laugh. The next moment, however, Miss Grace was busy at her work again, her attention as much engrossed with her needle as though Sir Walter Lee, with his beautiful eyes, which she was conscious were beaming so lackadassically upon her, were as great a myth as, and had no more real existence in this world of fact, than had Polyphemus, with his hideous one eye, so famous of old. Nevertheless (and I daresay my charming young lady readers will not be surprised at the fact), there was just the slightest smile of triumph glanced over Miss Grace's face as she stooped down to choose a new thread from a long slip of paper which looked like a snake with two bushy tails and no head, and of which triumphant smile she took very good care Sir Walter Lee should see nothing.

"Good morning, Miss Evelyn!" said the young man, in a low voice.

"Good morning, Sir Walter!" replied the girl, working away as hard as ever.

"I daresay you are rather surprised to see me here again, Miss Evelyn," said Sir Walter, rather embarrassed, as well he might be.

"I—I *am* rather, Sir Walter," she returned.

And then she went on with her work again, the gentleman watching her closely.

"I thought you were going abroad?" she said presently, now looking up at his face as though she could scarcely believe but what he had gone abroad, and that the individual she was now addressing was not really and truly Sir Walter himself, but only Sir Walter's ghost.

"A man may change his mind, Miss Evelyn, may he not? I

have changed mine, at all events, and I am not going at present."

"Oh, indeed!" replied the girl, carelessly.

"Are you sorry, Grace, that I have come back here?"

No; Grace wasn't particularly sorry; she wasn't particularly glad either. Why should she be? It wasn't any business of hers?

After that there was another silence, during which Sir Walter Lee began to fidget nervously with the riding-whip he carried in his hand, and with which he appeared very anxious to flick off the blossom from a geranium which flourished at the foot of the window.

Stitch, stitch, stitch, went Miss Grace's needle, as loudly and distinctly as though it were rather vain of having all the conversation to itself.

"May I observe, Sir Walter," said the girl at length, "that the geranium by the side of you is an especial favourite of my father's, and that unless you have any particular wish to destroy it, your riding-whip had better be reserved for the benefit of your horse?"

Of course Sir Walter stammered out an apology, and desisted immediately. He, however, still, apparently, found his riding-whip an incumbrance and rather in the way, for he next began most energetically to bite the end of it. And then Grace, who was unable any longer to preserve her gravity, gave way to a low, ringing laugh, which no doubt discomposed the baronet immensely.

"I am afraid, Miss Evelyn, you thought me—you must have thought me a great fool the night before last!" he said.

Grace screwed up her little mouth in a manner which implied she certainly did think so, but that she was too polite to say it.

"You rather puzzled me, and—and, indeed, to speak the plain truth, Sir Walter, you somewhat frightened me, I must admit."

"Ah, Grace!" cried the young man with emotion, "I would not willingly have frightened you for the world. I was mad that evening, I think."

"As you have said it yourself, Sir Walter," laughed the girl, good humouredly, "I must confess I thought you were; and you see I am uncommonly frightened at madmen."

You perceive that Grace was so pleased Sir Walter Lee had not gone away from Waverney after all, that she had no time to think about the dream which had disturbed her, or about all the perplexities and anxieties she had suffered since that eventful night.

"That evening, Grace, I was actuated ——"

But here again the excited young man was interrupted in his declaration, this time by the inopportune entrance of Mrs. Evelyn, who, having settled all disturbing matters downstairs to her satisfaction, had come in for the express purpose of having a chat. For,

of course, she knew nothing about Sir Walter's behaviour, since Grace was far too shy a puss to have told her mamma a word about that interview with the baronet as she was on her way to Farmer Smith's.

Wasn't Sir Walter mortified when he beheld the matron's face and ribboned cap and portly person coming in at the door! And what a nuisance he did think old ladies were! Certainly 'twas a pity the unconscious Mrs. Evelyn came in just then, and indeed all mammas in general may take my word for it, that when their daughters are in such good company as Grace was, their society can be very conveniently dispensed with. While, however, Sir Walter was, as it were, sitting upon thorns, and wondering whether Mrs. Evelyn was ever going out of the room again, that lady was most loquaciously informing him of all the village scandal with which she was herself acquainted, and indulging in the delusive opinion that she was rendering herself very excellent and amusing company. Soon after the Rector came home. He was rather distant in his behaviour towards his guest, the presence of whom amongst his family—particularly in respect of Grace—did not appear to afford him the greatest satisfaction. The Rector had plainly not forgotten his conversation of the other evening with his daughter, when the subject of Sir Walter's attention to her had been broached. Meanwhile the Rector's eye had fallen upon the letter addressed to himself, and which was lying upon the table.

"A letter to me?" he said, taking it up and breaking the seal.

"It is from George Wetherby, I think," said Grace.

"What does he say, my dear?" added that young lady's mamma.

"He, hum!—well, so much the better!" cried Mr. Evelyn, cheerily, having skimmed over the contents. "The more the merrier, say I."

"You haven't yet told us what it is, Andrew," said his wife, whose native curiosity was not appeased by these wild ejaculations.

"George Wetherby is going to bring a friend here with him," Mr. Evelyn explained.

"Then I must go and get ready; dear me, how I wish I had known!" cried his spouse, starting up with excitement. "But I suppose, my dear, George's friend will not object to——"

The rest of the sentence was, however, lost, Mrs. Evelyn having, before it was completed, bustled headlong out of the room.

"What is the name of the gentleman, papa?" demanded Grace.

"His name, my dear," returned the Rector, referring to the letter, "his name is—hem!—let me see; Lieutenant Dent, of the

99th Foot. Why, bless me, isn't that the same regiment, Sir Walter, which you were in?"

Sir Walter Lee, however, seemed not to hear the question; he was leaning against the wall, his face of a slaty pallor, and his hands clutching at the back of a chair, convulsively.

"Are you not well?" cried Mr. Evelyn, kindly, and hastening to the assistance of the young man.

"Yes, yes! I am quite well," returned Lee, waving him away with his hand impatiently. "Is he coming here? When—when is he coming?"

"We expect them this morning by the half-past twelve o'clock train, which reaches here at two; and, dear me, it now wants only a quarter of a hour to that time. Give me my hat, Grace; I will go and meet them."

"I will accompany you, if you please," said Lee, with calmness. "This Lieutenant Dent was an old friend of mine. I will be the first to welcome him to Waverney."

This, then, explains how it was that George Wetherby and his companion were overtaken by Mr. Evelyn, having with him Sir Walter Lee.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIEUTENANT DENT AT THE RECTORY.

THE four gentlemen bent their course towards the Rectory. Mr. Evelyn, though very solicitous to have a little quiet talk with his nephew, appeared to deem it incumbent upon him as host, to devote his conversation especially to the entertainment of Lieutenant Dent: so that after the few words which Sir Walter Lee had contrived to whisper into the latter gentleman's ear, he found no opportunity, during the remainder of the walk, of renewing their confidential intercourse. As the pointed top, with its score of gables, and the tall stack of chimneys of the Rectory loomed in sight, Lieutenant Dent might have been observed to smile significantly to his friend, George Wetherby; and the latter, who perceived that smile, though he had not the vaguest and remotest conception of its import, felt, as it were, bound in honour to smile at him as significantly in return.

"What is in the wind now?" he demanded in a low voice, seeming to wish to know what the other was smiling at.

"Is yonder your fair cousin whose face is peeping out at us through that bedroom window?" whispered the lieutenant, almost unable to refrain from a good laugh.

George looked in the direction indicated: thereupon he seem

as much disposed to hilarity as the other, nor did he make any attempt to disguise it. The fact was this: that Mrs. Evelyn, anxious lest anything in her establishment had gone amiss or been forgotten, had once more, and at the last moment, visited the double-bedded room which she had provided for her expected guests; and she was at that particular moment putting the last touch to the arrangement of the muslin curtains of spotless white, when Dent caught sight of her fair, round, buxom face.

"Not my fair cousin, sir," said George, "but my fair cousin's mamma."

"Piccavi!" muttered Dent, good-humouredly, "but I am the converse of Cæsar's '*Veni, vidi, vici*,' for I am quite prepared to go, to be seen, to be conquered, by this phoenix of a cousin of yours."

"What are you young fellows laughing at?" the Rector cried, in his cheery voice, and slapping George on the back almost as hard as if he were the crimson cushion in his own pulpit.

"Only because my military friend here was quoting a humorous passage from Cæsar's '*De Bello Gallico*.'"

"Humorous!" repeated the worthy clergyman, not perceiving the joke. "I declare I was not aware there was any passage, which, strictly speaking, could be called humorous, in the whole book."

By this time the party had arrived at the house, where the two ladies were ready to receive them. Lieutenant Dent was introduced to them in due form; Mrs. Evelyn saluting him with a low and stately curtsy of the old school, and Grace with a prim and demure bend—which was hospitable enough, and friendly withal—and which became her admirably.

"By Jove, old boy, you have not exaggerated!" whispered Dent, in an enthusiastic aside. "Positively she is charming!"

But the lieutenant having been introduced, it was now George's turn for recognition. Upon my veracity as an historian, Mrs. Evelyn looked almost as though she would like to eat him up—that is, if such a proceeding wouldn't do him any injury, you know. She put up her blushing cheek for his salute, which he gave her in good earnest, and then, as the elder lady had thus invested him with the kissing prerogative, he immediately pounced upon Miss Grace, and kissed her also,—only that in this case, he chose her lips—the dog! and I'll be bound to say the latter salute was not the most unpleasant of the two. As for Grace herself, this little episode being over, she glanced up rather anxiously at Sir Walter Lee—partly to see if he were offended, and partly, I suspect, to ascertain if he didn't look as though he would rather like to be served the same way.

After this, Master George Wetherby thought there was a good opportunity to pay his smiling aunt a compliment; so he began praising up her blooming and youthful looks in a manner which caused that lady quite to blush, her husband to become jocose, and her daughter to laugh outright. But when that young limb of the law, despite all the nudges and pokes in the ribs which the lieutenant gave him—when he, I say, informed her very seriously that his friend Dent had positively mistaken her for her pretty daughter Grace,—*that* was the climax. The small quantum of innocent vanity which the worthy woman possessed was no longer to be restrained and kept in abeyance, but bubbled up—

“Lor! you silly young men!” she cried, smiling, “how can you talk such nonsense to a woman of my age?”

Nevertheless, she glanced sideways in the looking-glass, and settled a wayward bow in her cap; and the Rector rubbed his hands, and vowed that, for his part, he should only take his spouse to be a trifle more than thirty, and Grace laughed more merrily than ever.

Mrs. Evelyn then announced that dinner was ready, and Sir Walter Lee, somehow without much pressing, agreed to remain to that meal instead of going over to partake of his own solitary, though more *recherché* repast, at Waverney Court. After dinner, the gentlemen were provided with cigars, and the Rector produced some of his famous wine, which only made its appearance upon high days and holidays: and though the smokers had to retire to the back parlour for fear they should incommode the ladies with the strong perfume of the narcotic weed, I have little doubt that they enjoyed themselves sufficiently.

Now it happened that the front and back parlours of the Rectory communicated with one another by means of folding-doors, which in general, and on this occasion, were taken off their hinges, thus making the two rooms almost like one. It happened also that this afternoon the smokers were Lieutenant Dent and Sir Walter Lee—Mr. Wetherby having, for the present, declined to join them, in order, as he said, that he might have a little chat with his cousin Grace; an observation which, simple as it was, appeared to give no great and unmitigated satisfaction to Sir Walter.

Both the Rector and his wife happened to be absent from the room just at that time; and, doubtless, Mr. George Wetherby found the sprightly conversation of Grace a very agreeable substitute for the wiser and more matured discourse of her parents. But it fell out, that whilst these two were in the midst of their prattle, Mr. Evelyn came in, bearing apparently some message to Grace from her mamma, and George, thinking it delicate and prudent that he should suffer his hostess to forward her domestic commissions and

commands unimpeded by the presence of the sex which it was scarcely proper should be initiated into such matters, he arose from his chair and busied himself in admiring the paintings, engravings, and other articles of vertu which adorned the rooms. Thus it came to pass that the young lawyer, without intending it, was placed in such a position that he had Mr. Evelyn and his daughter upon one hand, and Sir Walter Lee with Lieutenant Dent upon the other, and he was therefore constrained to hear a portion of the conversation of both, though that conversation was in both cases conducted in a low voice.

The Rector, so it seemed to George, having whispered his message from his wife to Grace, and that young lady having responded thereto in a satisfactory manner, seated himself on the sofa on which his daughter was reading, and seemed, from the embarrassed way in which he was fidgetting about, to have something more for Grace's ear, which he hardly knew how to get out.

"Gracie, my dear," George Wetherby overheard the Rector say, as he edged a little nearer to the girl.

"Yes, papa," returned Grace, quietly, scarcely looking up from her book.

"You don't seem quite yourself, my dear, to-day. Is there anything wrong?"

"Wrong?" repeated Grace, in the same quiet tone.

"I am afraid, Gracie," said the Rector, taking her hand, "you have not quite forgiven your old father for the advice he gave you the other night."

The girl glanced up quickly, and her face flushed into a slight red tint as she replied—

"Have I been acting improperly now? I thought I was very distant and formal, sir, in all my conversation with Sir Walter Lee —"

"Ah, my dear child," interrupted her father, tenderly, "you will persist in misunderstanding me; what I said to you was merely to put you, my dear, upon your guard, and to —"

The remainder of the sentence young Wetherby did not overhear. Indeed, the whole of the few remarks to which he had been an unintentional listener were not very clear in their meaning to him. He felt, however, that whatever they might be about, the subject was a private and a delicate one, and one, moreover, with which he had no business. So, still seeming to admire the pictures on the walls, he moved quietly away from that part of the room where the Rector and his daughter were sitting, in order that he might get out of hearing distance. This movement on his part, however, only changed matters a little. As he got out of hearing what his uncle and pretty cousin were saying, so he managed

to get in the same ratio within hearing distance of the conversation of Lieutenant Dent and Sir Walter Lee.

¶ These two were in the midst of an earnest dialogue, which they also conducted in subdued tones. So fully engrossed were they with themselves and with what they were saying that they did not observe the movement of George, whose approach, therefore, did not interrupt their conversation.

"I hope to heaven you have not said anything!" Sir Walter Lee was saying, as he bent forward with evident anxiety to catch the reply.

"No, I have said nothing, my dear fellow. I pledge my word," Dent replied, puffing his cigar. "But I tell you candidly I was on the point of doing so when you came up. If you had been another minute I should have let it all out as sure as you're alive."

"To whom?" demanded, Lee, hastily.

"To Mr. Wetherby, of course. You know, my dear fellow, I was not aware that you had any ——"

"Then you have not revealed that little secret? Upon my soul, Dent, I am very glad of that!"

And Sir Walter leant back in his chair with a sigh of intense relief.

Lieutenant Dent continued puffing his cigar in silence and contemplating his agitated friend with a surprise his *nonchalant* air was unable to conceal.

"I don't like being an eavesdropper to the private secrets of these mysterious people," muttered George to himself. "A fellow might overhear something unpleasant, and I've no particular wish to become the depository of anything disagreeable." Whereupon to apprise the others of his presence, he gave a loud and emphatic cough.

The two gentlemen were, however, too much occupied by their discourse to pay any heed to his well-meant warning. The lieutenant was the first to renew their conversation.

"It isn't that I want to be inquisitive, my dear Lee; you know me too well for that," he said; "but, really, I don't see why you should be so anxious these people should not know ——"

"I can't well explain my reasons to you now, Dent. You will know them, perhaps, some day," replied Lee, in the same undertone in which the whole of their talk had been conducted. The fact is," he added, quickly, "if such a thing got bruited about in such an exclusive part of the community as the Waverneyites, it would be the ruin of my reputation for ever: they would never overlook such an improper connection, as you will of course see; and so I've made up my mind to keep the whole of the affair as quiet as possible, and say never a word about it. *Entendez-vous, mon ami?*"

Lee had been speaking the latter part of the sentence with rapidity and some confusion, turning away his face from Dent as he did so. The impression created in the mind of George Wetherby by the peculiarity of his manner was such, that though he had not the faintest conception to what these observations referred, yet he felt somehow convinced that the baronet was not speaking with candour. Possibly this was the impression received also by Dent, for when he replied he spoke with unwonted coolness.

"The affair is yours" he said. "You may rest assured I will preserve your secret."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks, my dear fellow, for the assurance; but—hush!"

The approach of the heavy footsteps of Mr. Evelyn at this juncture put an end to this mysterious dialogue. Mrs. Evelyn soon afterwards made her appearance also, and the gentlemen, having finished their cigars, repaired to the front room, and another half-hour or so having elapsed in general conversation, the hostess announced that tea was ready.

Of all meals that come in the regular course of daily routine, I regard tea as the pleasantest; and when it is in the country, look you, a smoke-dried cockney is the best man in the world to enjoy it.

Miss Grace presided over her mamma's best silver tea-pot, and the sprightly gossip and cheerful smiles of that young lady were as refreshing as the beverage she dispensed in her tea-cups, and as sweet as the sugar with which she tempered it. Sir Walter (though her manner to him was distant and formal) looked at her as though he thought them much sweeter.

Somehow Mr. Wetherby was very silent, and the company rallied him occasionally upon his thoughtful and woe-begone aspect. He could not restrain his thoughts from wandering to the singular remarks he had that afternoon overheard. His apprehension of their meaning was of course extremely vague; nevertheless he felt deeply interested. The mysterious has a charm for most people; and if anyone stumbles upon a secret, he is naturally anxious to ferret it out—a psychological fact which I have endeavoured to turn to my own advantage in the compilation of this story, and the truth of which I hope may be exemplified by the reader being sufficiently enthralled by the mysteries which enshroud Sir Walter Lee.

Despite, however, the abstraction of George, the evening passed off pleasantly. Grace played tolerably upon the piano and sang divinely.

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. EVELYN'S LITTLE SCHEME.

"WHAT lovely weather it is, my dear, to be sure!"

And Mrs. Evelyn, the morning after the events of the last chapter, folded her hands in her lap, and looked out at the sunbeams playing with the already discoloured foliage of the churchyard-trees with admiration. Wetherby and his friend had gone out for a long walk, Grace was absent from the room, and Mrs. Evelyn's companion was her husband. That gentleman was perusing some documents connected with his clerical duties. Without paying much attention to his wife's remark, he admitted that it was lovely weather, indeed, and that we ought to be thankful to the overruling Providence for all His mercies. There being no disputing this, Mrs. Evelyn looked out at the sunbeams a little while longer, and presently put her dimpled little fingers to her lips with a preparatory "Ahem!" Now this caused the Rector to glance up from his papers sharply and suspiciously; for when his wife gave expression to that emphatic dissyllable, he was very well aware, from experience, that something was coming more.

"I wonder," thought Mr. Evelyn to himself, "whether it is a new bonnet, or a dress, or a shawl; or whether Grace wants boots; or whether the copper has burst and blown up; or whether John——"

Nothing, however, of all these was it, as soon became evident.

"I was, thinking, Andrew, that we ought to do something to amuse George and his friend while they are down here."

"No doubt of it, my dear," replied the Rector. "What do you propose?"

"Ahem!" said the lady, again; "couldn't we, my dear, get up a little picnic—just among ourselves, you know—and go out for a drive somewhere?"

At the word "picnic," the Rector's eye literally gleamed. Nothing in the world could have delighted him better, and no one would more enjoy himself in a quiet gathering of a few selected friends. But then, as all my married readers know, when a wife makes a proposition, however agreeable the same may be to her lord, it does not do for him to assent to it too readily. By seeming to hesitate a bit, you may make it seem as though you were granting a favour. By agreeing to the proposition under a sort of protest—by suffering it to be *extorted* from you, as it were—you see, my friend, you get the pull upon your better half, and, if all goes right, are you not a self-sacrificing man, who have suffered yourself to be drawn into things that you yourself don't care a fig about to

oblige *her*? whereas, if anything goes *wrong*, you can shrug your shoulders, as much as to say, "This, my dear, is *your* proposition; I was adverse to it all along; but you have had your way, and this is the consequence." The Rector practised this little matrimonial move, which, I am bound to confess, is not always employed by the gentlemen only, it being, of course, *possible* for the lady to suffer herself to be victimised sometimes; nay, I affirm that such a thing has positively been known to have taken place once or twice since the world began.

"A picnic, my dear?" he observed, feeling his chin, and looking out of window doubtfully. "The worst of these little parties, my dear, is, they are so expensive."

"Oh, as to the *expense*, Andrew," cried Mrs. Evelyn, eagerly, "I'll take care of that."

The Rector wanted to smile, but rubbed his chin again, and shook his head.

"The clouds look very heavy, my dear; I fear we shall not be long without having rain, though the weather is fine just now," he said.

Mrs. Evelyn was annoyed at his perversity, and tapped her little foot upon the carpet with an impatience which displayed her annoyance.

"Well, Andrew," she said, "of course, if you have set your heart against the picnic, there is an end of it; only, my dear, I thought a little quiet and innocent amusement——"

It was now high time the gentleman should soften, and appear to quietly yield up the point to his wife's solicitude.

"Nay, my dear," he returned, with great good-humour and much inward satisfaction, "if my little wifey has set her heart on the picnic, there is only the *beginning* of it. Where shall we go to, and when shall it be, my dear, eh?—when shall it be?"

"No, never mind, Andrew; we won't go!" replied the lady, with the air of a deeply-injured woman, who has stoically made up her mind boldly to meet her fate, and with great decision withal.

"Won't go!" replied the Rector, opening wide his eyes in astonishment at this sudden change, and leaning back in his chair.

"No, Andrew! it is better, perhaps, as it is. Besides, my dear, upon re-consideration, I don't know what quiet, friendly people we could invite."

"Good gracious me, Maria!—not know whom we could invite?" almost roared the Rector, his eyes getting so very big with amazement that it seemed doubtful whether they wouldn't monopolise the whole of his face. "Why, bless my heart, there are the Barbers, and the Phillipses, and the——"

A despondent sigh interrupted the enumeration of the list. In fact, it was pretty evident that the lady saw completely through her excellent husband, and that she was now, with admirable strategy, compelling him to change places with her, and to stand in those shoes (figuratively speaking) which he had cunningly devised for her. When he heard that sigh, the poor clergyman became fearfully crestfallen at once; he thought it was all up with the contemplated recreation now. How he wished he hadn't so much opposed the scheme at first! Could he but have witnessed the inward triumph of his worthy spouse, of which that sigh was but the too deceitful veil!

"Well, I never did in all my life!" he ejaculated, at length. "I thought, Maria, you were so eager for it, just now!"

"I, Andrew?—*I* eager?" returned the other, with well-dissembled surprise. "Not *I*, indeed; I thought *you* were. I thought you were only too anxious to give your only nephew and his friend a little pleasure while he was a guest beneath your roof!"

"And so I am, my dear; and so of course I am."

Mrs. Evelyn shook her head and looked up at the sky.

"But you see, Andrew, I am afraid of the weather," she began, seeming to yield very unwillingly. "The clouds look very black, certainly, as you were just now remarking, and——"

"The clouds!" cried the Rector, delighted. "Pooh, pooh, my dear, never trust to the clouds. How does the barometer stand? The barometer is the thing to go by. Let me go and look, and—and here comes Gracie! Well, Grace, you puss, we're going to have a pic-nic."

And the dear old fellow kissed his daughter, and then he kissed his wife and then his daughter again—just for all the world as though the two ladies were flowers, and he were smelling them and couldn't quite make up his mind which of them was the sweetest. And then he positively skipped out of the room to look at the weather-glass, and, good gracious me! when he saw that the indicator pointed to "set fair," his face was so radiant and cheerful and sunny, you might almost have sworn *he* was the cause of so favourable an appearance; and that the warmth and geniality of his smiling countenance had unduly affected the mercury.

Grace fell very cordially into her father's views, and it is almost needless to add, that after being solicited for a sufficient length of time in order to preserve appearances, Mrs. Evelyn at length allowed herself to fall into them also.

From that time forth all was bustle and preparation; for Mrs. Evelyn, whenever she had anything of this sort in hand, was certainly not the woman "to let the grass grow under her feet," in bringing it to maturity.

Meanwhile Grace and her father put their two heads together to consider who should be the select few invited to partake of the pleasure of their little trip ; and I am afraid if all had come whom the Rector wanted, they would have comprised nearly the whole of the respectable community of Waverney ; so there was a good deal of discussion, and consideration, and referring to mamma, whose decision was in all cases final, and she determined that the party should be confined within the circumscribed limits at first contemplated, and that only two or three besides their own family should be asked. To these favoured ones Miss Grace wrote small notes, in neatest possible hand ; and enclosing them in little pink envelopes, despatched them to their respective destinations by the hands of John.

As for George Wetherby and his friends, for whose edification this little *fête* was to be prepared, I am sorry to say they did not really care so very much about it as they should have done. I fancy pic-nics were rather stale entertainments to both of them. George, however, had the goodnature to appear very pleased, and to pretend to take a great interest in all the arrangements, and the consequence was, that he soon worked himself into taking an interest in it in good sooth.

Sir Walter Lee called again at the Rectory that morning soon after the decision had been come to, and there can be no question that *he* entered into the scheme heart and soul, though it is not unlikely pic-nics in general were as stale and flat to him as to the other gentlemen. Circumstances, however, as the reader is aware, alter cases.

It was moved, seconded, and carried unanimously, that the little *fête* should take place on the day next but one to that upon which it was first suggested ; so that there was little time to be lost. It is, however, a well authenticated fact in every-day metaphysics, that pleasures which are unexpected are often the most enjoyed. And though so little notice was given, our friends found all their invitations were accepted by those to whom they were accorded.

I have already intimated that if our clerical friend had had his own way, he would most likely have summoned the whole of his congregation. As it was, however, the whole party consisted of about a dozen at most, for whom the Rector proposed a van should be hired, just the same as when the Sunday-school children were taken to their annual bun-feast. This proposition was, however, set aside, upon Sir Walter Lee kindly offering the use of a couple of carriages from the Court.

I say nothing whatever of the anxiety and flutter of Grace, that everything should be in apple-pie order ; nor of the careful

and excellent cook-craft and general superintendence of her mamma, because I do not think a masculine pen ought to attempt such things; indeed, for my part, and to be very frank with my readers, I am sadly fearful I have got rather out of my depth in my descriptions once or twice already.

The eventful morn at length arrived, and now Aurora, leaving Tithona's safron bed, first sowed the earth with new-born light, and, heralded by the radiant orb of day, filled the expectant hearts of Waverney with gladness. Alas! I cannot rise with my theme into the regions of poetry; I must constrain my gushing out-pourings to sober prose; and so I merely say the day was splendid.

Mrs. Evelyn and Grace were, of course, on account of their still recent bereavement, in mourning; but then that of Grace wore as little of the dismal sombreness of mourning as it was possible for the proper amount of crape to impart. She had such a coquettish way of wearing everything, I verily believe she would have looked well even in the ruff and fardingale of Queen Elizabeth; and had she been that kingly queen's contemporary, I do not doubt she would have made her almost as jealous as Mary Stuart did. As it was, when the guests made their appearance at the Rectory, which was the starting-point, although the ladies were, of course, as smart as new pins, I don't think Grace in her sombre habiliments contrasted unfavourably with any of them.

If any stranger had happened to have been at Waverney that day, and had seen Mr. Evelyn and his groom (or coachman or man-of-all-work) of whom mention has already been made under the designation of John—if any stranger, I say, had seen these two labouring away like horses in the conveyance of hampers and carpet-bags and other such vehicles for the transmission of provisions to the carriages, that stranger might not unnaturally have opined that the packages contained mitres, bishop's gowns, crosiers, cardinal's hats, and other such baubles ecclesiastical, so eager did our worthy divine appear in their safe disposal.

"Now, John, everything ready, eh? Nothing forgotten I hope, eh?" cried the Rector, when everything was ready. "Got plenty of provender for the horses, John? That's right, John, that's right; because it won't do to forget anything on a day like this, will it, John?"

John grinned and laughed, and said yes and no, and showed his great rows of teeth in such a manner that his face looked almost like a chaff-cutting machine, and the words he kept clipping off with such rapidity the chaff.

So there was nothing more to be done until the ladies and gentlemen took their seats in the carriages, which, so eager were they all to get off, they were not long in doing; everybody looking

cheerful and self-satisfied except Sir Walter Lee, who, on account of his distinguished position, was invited to ride in the same carriage with the Rector and his wife, while Grace sat in the other, in which also rode Lieutenant Dent. George Wetherby had for his *vis-a-vis* the eldest Miss Phillips, the young lady whom, it may be remembered, her mamma had designed to become my Lady Lee. And as this young damsel was a tall, handsome, and dashing girl of twenty summers or thereabouts, and who did not inflict upon Mr. Wetherby too much trouble of talking, she got on very well with him; and as Mr. Wetherby was a good-looking fellow, who sometimes met her sallies with a dry retort, he got on well with her; and as, moreover, he was a "barrister" of the Temple, London, with a private income of a couple of hundred a-year—as Mrs. Phillips had already ascertained—he got on equally well with her mamma.

The other company consisted of another and more juvenile Miss Phillips, who dressed like her sister, even to the straw hat and silver buckle—or was it steel?—and flowing pink sash; and who, being only sixteen, was of course as anxious to look two years or so older as her elder sister was to look the same period younger. Then there was Master Phillips, an over-grown lad of eighteen, who appeared to have grown too long for his trousers, without having become proportionally fat to fill them out, whose voice was husky and breaking, and who was just learning to smoke. Mr. Phillips, senior, a little man who quailed under his wife's eye, and talked politics, building, and architecture with his friend Mr. Barber, who, for his part, quailed under his wife's tongue. Besides Mr. and Mrs. Barber and an unmarried sister of the latter, with her sky-terrier, which she secured by a ribbon to her waist, there was a certain Dr. McCarthy, a jolly old buck, who made capital punch and execrable puns, and then laughed at them in such a hearty way that other people were constrained to laugh also; and Mr. Swain, a simple young man who played the flute, and was curate of Waverney.

Early in the morning our friends were on the start. They designed proceeding to a little island called "Chiswick Island," which some of my readers may, perhaps, recognise as a charmingly romantic and fertile spot on the borders of the Thames, and not far from Sheerness. This place was about ten miles from Waverney. If the company were in good spirits when they started, the brisk ride certainly increased their hilarity. What, indeed, can be pleasanter than a drive along a country road on a fine summer morning, with good company and smiling faces among you? There had been a slight shower of rain at the early dawn, but now the sun was shining brightly, and making glorious the whole broad expanse of country far and near.

All along through villages they rolled, past little way-side inns, where the half-drunk revellers raised their fishy eyes to wonder at them and to stare. Past farms, from the tall chimney-stacks of which the smoke curled lazily, floated by the summer breeze. Sometimes they would pass a village church, whose ancient walls were canopied with creeping ivy. Once, indeed, they met a rustic wedding party tripping along gaily, as many a swain and modest maiden has done before, towards a quaint little church which crested a hill, and the bells of which our friends could hear ringing a cheerful peal, until the joyful sounds were lost to them in the distance. But the pleasantest, perhaps, of all these pleasant things, was our dear old Rector's face. How it did shine and glow! How he did laugh and joke and rub his hands! And what tremendous compliments he did pay the ladies, young and old, married and single—'twas all the same to him! Upon my word he actually made that unmarried sister of Mrs. Barber blush to the very roots of her—wig. And that lady tapped him upon the shoulder with her fan, and pouting archly, vowed he "was a naughty, good-for-nothing man," and that if she were Mrs. Evelyn—which, probably, the Rector, despite his compliments, was heartily thankful she was not—she would box his ears, she would; and so pleased was she at everything he said and did, that in her virgin breast she heaved a sigh that single men were not as appreciative of the good and beautiful, and truly pure of female kind, as he.

But perhaps this simple-minded clergyman shone out the sunniest when a troop of little shoeless children, clustered in a country lane, opened the wooden-gate through which the party had to pass, and tossing their caps—they, at least, I mean who had them—and they who were without, their hands gleefully in the air with hearty shouts of unsophisticated welcome, and suffered our friends to rattle by, and never ceased their clamour until the distance made the decreasing sounds mingle harmoniously with the pealing of the village bells, also tinkling softly far away. You should have seen the Rector *then*. If his dear round, old face seemed a sun before, now it looked a perfect constellation. For if there was one thing the Rector loved to look upon, it was a group of children in happy enjoyment of their innocent sport, and what he loved the best to hear was their playful shouting and careless laughter. So he put his sleek, fat hands into his deep, capacious pocket, and scattered his half-pence among them with no frugal hand. And then he sank into his seat, rubbing his knees in deep enjoyment, and blessing the children and all the world.

About noon the party arrived at their destination, and having good appetites to appreciate the excellent comestibles with which Mrs. Evelyn had taken care they should be well provided. The

carriages were put up at an inn in a little village near the island, which island, by the way, formed an adjunct to the park of some gentleman's estate. To this rural retreat our friends proceeded on foot, Sir Walter Lee this time taking care to secure Grace Evelyn as his companion, and his soft blue eyes continually seeking hers with an ineffable tenderness.

Under the shadow of a spreading oak, our friends sat down before a snow white cloth, with plenty of good things to eat and drink arranged temptingly upon it. Before a thing was touched, our Rector called the company to bend their heads, and say within their hearts a word of thanks to Him whose bounteous hand has given us all things. Then, with the summer breeze breathing softly upon them, with the river sparkling in the noon-day sun, and rippling its own gentle music at their feet ; with the trembling sound of the foliage above them, and the chirp and twitter of the feathered children who had sought shelter in the boughs ; with the lowing cattle, and the bleating of sheep in the distance ; and the popping of corks, and the sparkling of champagne ; with the laugh of pleasure, and the lighter hearts which confirm it when that pleasure is innocent—our party sat down to the feast.

A WINTER'S DAY AT HAWORTH

Most of our readers are old enough to remember the excitement caused by the publication of "Jane Eyre, a novel, by Currer Bell." The interest excited by that extraordinary book was only equalled by the desire of the public to discover who was its mysterious author. Who was this "Currer Bell?" Was he a man, or was she a woman? Was it his or her real name, or only a *nom-de-plume*? In what part of England did he or she dwell? These were the questions which agitated every literary *colerie* in London in the winter of 1847, and in the solution of which even the general public felt an interest. The publishers of the book were, however, discreet. No unguarded expression from them ever suffered the secret of its authorship to escape. Towards the close of 1849, however, "Shirley, a novel, by the author of 'Jane Eyre'" appeared. The scene of this work was laid in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and it was generally felt that the hand which had written that book must have lived long—probably was still living—in the very district which the work described so minutely and so well. All the world knows the rest. It was speedily discovered that these books, which had roused so much curiosity, excited so much admiration, and experienced such diverse criticism, were written by Miss Charlotte Brontë, the daughter of an unknown country clergyman, living at Haworth, an unknown village in the West Riding of Yorkshire, which said West Riding of Yorkshire was also an unknown land to the great bulk of English readers. In 1857, Mrs. Gaskell's "Life of Charlotte Brontë," was published, telling the world something of the inner life of that quiet Haworth parsonage. It told us how within the walls of that remote country house there had lived and died a family of almost unequalled talent, and of unparalleled originality. It told us how, in consequence of the remoteness of their dwelling, and of the early death of their mother, the children in that house saw no female society—nor, indeed, any society whatever. The book went on to tell how, nevertheless, when mere children, so soon as they could read and write, Charlotte and her brother and sisters used to invent and act little plays of their own; how they took the most vivid interest in the public characters of the day; how not only local and home, but even foreign politics were eagerly discussed by them; how they wrote and edited little magazines of their own; how their father said that long before the death of his eldest daughter, Maria, at the age of eleven years, he could converse with her on the leading topics of the day "with as much freedom as with any grown-up person;" finally how Charlotte Brontë's eldest sister

Emily (the original of the character of *Shirley*, and herself author of that strangely powerful book "Wuthering Heights") was a girl of such determined strength of will, that being bitten by a strange dog one day, she quietly went into the kitchen, took up an Italian iron which was heating before the fire, herself inserted the red-hot end into the bleeding wound, and coolly screwed it round therein—thus effectually cauterising the wound.

Emily's only brother, Branwell, was cast in the same stern mould as herself. One instance of his marvellous strength of will proved this. During his life he had always maintained that to the last human will could conquer human weakness, and he declared that in order to prove this, he himself, when his time came, would stand up to die! Accordingly, when the death agony seized him, he rose to his feet—and so died. These, and many another equally interesting anecdote of the Brontë family, are they not written in Mrs. Gaskell's noble "Life of Charlotte Brontë?" Nay, more, are not the characteristics of this wonderful family written yet more plainly in those three extraordinary books, "*Jane Eyre*," by Charlotte Brontë (Currer Bell); "*Wuthering Heights*" by her sister, Emily Brontë (Ellis Bell); and the "*Tenant of Wildfell Hall*," by the youngest sister, Anne Brontë (Acton Bell)?

I had long been anxious to visit Haworth, and on the 22nd January, 1867, finding myself in Leeds, I resolved, in company with a literary friend, to carry our wish into execution. We therefore took the train at Leeds for Keighley, that being the nearest railway station to Haworth. Keighley (pronounced *Keathley* by the natives) is a long, dirty, straggling town on the Leeds and Skipton line of railway. It seems entirely devoted to mills, for everything is of mills—if we may coin a word—*milly*. The distance of Haworth from Keighley is about four miles. The road ascends the whole way, the traveller having on his right a beck (stream) flowing down the valley in which the town of Keighley is situated. The weather, on the occasion of our visit, was intensely cold, the country all around being a foot deep in snow. The road, in consequence of the severity of the frost, was exceedingly slippery, and our walk, therefore, from Keighley to Haworth was a somewhat laborious one. A railway was then in course of construction from Keighley to Haworth, and has since the time of our visit been opened. My friend and I were, however, not permitted to be blessed with its assistance, and so had painfully to clamber along the frozen road, which every moment increased in steepness. As we struggled up the ascent we could not but help thinking how often the Brontë family had traversed this very road, hurrying back from Keighley, bearing home with them in triumph what was a precious treasure to them, viz., some new book from the little cir-

culating library in that small town. As a turn of the road suddenly brought into view the small quiet figures of two young ladies clad in mourning, one almost started, thinking, "Surely these must indeed be they!" But, alas! it is now twelve years since Charlotte Brontë traversed this road for the last time, and nigher twenty since the three Brontë sisters trod it in company. It was indeed to us a saddening thought that every member of that gifted Brontë family has died without leaving a single lineal descendant, so that, save for the possession of their works—which are left as a precious heritage to us from them—the whole family has disappeared from amongst us as completely as if they had never existed.

The people whom we pass on the road stare hard at us, as though strangers were a rarity in this part. Each passer-by, we notice, instead of shoes or boots, wears wooden clogs, which clank noisily as he proceeds on his way. The sky overhead looked heavy and threatening; whilst in every direction, far as the eye could reach, were hills upon hills of sullen outline. By the time the traveller has accomplished two of the four miles which intervene between Keighley and Haworth, he sees the village of which he is in quest, right before him. At first sight Haworth seems literally to be situated amongst the clouds, for the village stands on the side of a steep hill which is crowned at the top by the village church. From the very back of the church rise the wild moors—the clouds and moors seeming in truth almost to merge themselves in one at the back of the sacred edifice. For a short time the road takes a sudden turn and the traveller loses sight of Haworth. Anon, however, the village again comes in sight, the beck is crossed by a stone bridge, and the foot of the village street is reached.

The village is built on the sides of an exceedingly steep hill—in places nearly perpendicular—up which we slowly climb. At the top of the street stands the church, shortly before reaching which the ascent really becomes appalling—amply sufficient, we apprehend, to tax the endurance of even a member of the Alpine Club. We perceived, as we passed the post-office, that visitors were now expected at Haworth, for in the little window were copies of Charlotte Brontë's works; those of her sisters; Mrs. Gaskell's "Life of Charlotte Brontë;" also photographs of the Rev. Mr. Brontë, and of the church and parsonage. At length the top of the village street is gained. The road suddenly widening here, the visitor enters an open space or oblong, in the midst of which stands the church, and closely abutting upon it are the schools, the sexton's house, and two or three excellent inns. Dinner having been ordered at the "Black Bull"—the inn patronised, alas! too frequently by Branwell, the gifted and only brother of the Brontë family—we proceeded to view the church.

The sexton, a fine, handsome man, of perhaps five-and-thirty years of age, showed us over the church. Unlike most *cicerones* of his class, who immediately the visitor enters begin their sing-song, cut-and-dried, monotonous account of each object of interest, this man waited to be questioned, and when questioned, answered the various inquiries we put to him, quietly and well.

The church is of great antiquity, but it is an ugly, puritanical building, without any pretensions to architectural beauty of any sort. The pulpit, reading-desk, and clerk's seat are all placed one above the other, thus forming what the extreme High-Church party, in derision, call "a three-decker." This expression of contempt has—if I am not in error—only been in use for a very few years, yet an evidence of the spread of civilisation may be found in the fact that the sexton at once made use of this expression in pointing out to us the obnoxious article of church furniture. The interior of the church is mean in appearance. The pews are of black oak, the only noteworthy fact about them being that the names of the occupants are painted up in white letters, instead of being written upon a card as more usually is the case. The accommodation they afford is also calculated to a nicety; for example, in one pew is painted up, "This pew contains $8\frac{1}{2}$ sittings."

Proceeding towards the east end of the church, our attention is attracted by a neat mural tablet erected within the communion railing. This tablet is of white Carrara marble, on a ground of dove-coloured marble, with a cornice surmounted by an ornamental pediment. Between the brackets which support the tablet is inscribed the sacred monogram, "I. H. S.," in old English letters. This tablet bears the following inscription in Roman letters; the initials are, however, in old English:—

" IN MEMORY OF

MARIA, Wife of the Rev. P. BRONTË, A.B., Minister of Haworth.

She died Sept. 15th, 1821, in the 39th year of her age.

Also of

MARIA, their Daughter,

Who died May 6th, 1825, in the 12th year of her age.

Also of

ELIZABETH, their Daughter,

Who died June 15th, 1825, in the 11th year of her age.

Also of

PATRICK BRANWELL, their Son,

Who died Sept. 24, 1848, aged 31 years.

Also of

EMILY JANE, their Daughter,

Who died Dec. 19, 1848, aged 30 years.

Also of

ANNE, their Daughter,

Who died May 28th, 1849, aged 29 years.

She was buried at the Old Church, Scarborough.

Also of

CHARLOTTE, their Daughter, Wife of the Rev. A. B. NICHOLLS, B.A.

She died March 31st, 1855, in the 39th year of her age.

'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'—1 COR. xv. 56, 57."

Since this tablet was first erected, in April, 1858, the Rev. Mr. Brontë, the father, and sole survivor of his family, has also been borne to his rest. He died in the spring of 1861, aged 85 years.

The sexton, who is the son of the former sexton, who presided during Charlotte's life, was born at Haworth, and has lived there all his days.

"Yes, he knew every one of the Brontë family well. No, they didn't visit much among the people in the village. They were fonder of taking long walks by themselves on the moors. Many a time, sir, have I seen them, along with their dogs, going up that path," pointing, as he spoke, to a narrow foot-road crossing the churchyard, and ascending at once onto the sweeping, snow-covered moors. "Yes, Emily (Ellis Bell) was very reserved. Anne was the loveliest, sir. Whenever they were baking at the parsonage, she always took care to make me—I was a little lad, then, you know, sir—an apple pasty; or, if she couldn't make me one, then she would give me a handful of raisins, or something of that sort."

"Did you know Branwell?" said I.

"Oh, yes, I knew him well, too."

"Was he not very clever?"

"That he was, sir! I'll give you an instance of it. I'll tell you what I've seen him do often and often. I have seen him take two quills, one in each hand, and write two letters at once on two different subjects, whilst some one kept talking to him. He wrote just as easily with the left hand as with the right. The way he first began to write with both hands, he told me, was this. One day he was at a railway-station, and he wanted very much to get two letters written before the train came up, and it occurred to him that he might as well write them both at once. He tried, and found he could do it quite well."

"Did you know Mr. Nicholls, the curate, who married Charlotte Brontë?" asked my friend.

"Yes; I knew him well. A nice man he was. Quiet, you know, but very kind, and a real good hard-worker."

"How long was Mr. Nicholls at Haworth?"

"Why, altogether, he was here for about seventeen years. Ten years he was here afore he married Miss Brontë, and about seven years afterwards. Four months after Mr. Brontë died he went away."

"Did he apply for the living after Mr. Brontë's death?" we asked.

"Yes; he did, sir," answered the sexton; "but he didn't get it."

"But surely," said we, "having been curate here for seventeen years of his life, having known the Brontë family so long, and having married Charlotte Brontë, he was the most suitable person to have been appointed."

"Well, I don't know how it was, sir," responded the sexton; "but all I know is, he sent in his application to the trustees, and hearing there was going to be some opposition to him, he withdrew it."

"Mrs. Gaskell was also here, was she not?" inquired my friend.

"Yes, sir," replied the sexton, "she was here; but we don't like her nor yet her book. She says something about us folk that isn't true. We think her book's libellous."

So talking, he showed us the communion-pew, in front of which Charlotte Brontë was married, and under which she now lies buried, almost on the very spot where her feet must have stood during the performance of the marriage rite. All the family, also, except Anne, are buried close beside her. The sexton then pointed out to us the Brontë pew, which is close before the altar, and especially showed us where she (Charlotte) used to sit.

"She was," he said, "very little, and had a footstool for her feet. Yes, the pew was in exactly the same state as when they sat in it. Ah, sir," continued the sexton, "I once saw Thackeray and an American, who, they tell me, is a great man over there, called Emerson, and Miss Martineau, and Miss Brontë, all sitting in that pew, one Sunday. Thackeray and Emerson came to visit Miss Brontë for a day or two, that was how they all sat there on the Sunday."

"What a brilliant array of talent did not this little pew in Haworth Church contain that Sunday!" thought we; and then we felt sorrowful as we recollected that the two most illustrious of its occupants are now numbered with the dead!

Next the sexton took us to the vestry, to show us Charlotte Brontë's marriage register, in which we saw the signatures of Mr. Nicholls and Charlotte Brontë, "signed in the presence of us, Ellen Nussey and Margaret Wooler." The former of these two witnesses is, we may here mention, the original of the character of

Caroline Helstone, in "*Shirley*;" the latter was Miss Brontë's old schoolmistress and attached friend through life.

Having duly inscribed our names in the visitors'-book, which, we noticed, contained the names of persons from all quarters of the globe, we were taken out of the church into the churchyard, and shown the grave of old Tabby, the faithful servant, for thirty years, of the Brontë family, and who loved each member of that family with a mother's love. Her grave is immediately in front of the parsonage-house, which faces down upon the church. It is a plain house, of two stories in height, and is built of grey stone, in the most substantial manner, in order to enable it to withstand the fierce wintry blasts which sweep down upon it from the desolate moors. The house is roofed with stone slabs, as the wind would easily strip off any ordinary covering of tiles. A small garden, containing a few shrubs, lies in front of the house, separating it from the graveyard.

The present incumbent of Haworth has, with execrably bad taste, removed the plain, old-fashioned house-windows which existed during the Brontës' time, and has substituted large, bran-new plate-glass ones, of the most approved Regent-street construction. Anything more utterly out of keeping with the rest of the surroundings than are these plate-glass windows it is impossible to conceive. Everything else about the house—always excepting those unfortunate plate-glass windows—is in unison with the wierd, desolate scene which surrounds the parsonage.

Standing near Tabby's grave a very fine view may be obtained of the hills and moors which surround the churchyard on every side. The parsonage-house apparently consists of two rooms, one on each side of the door. We say "apparently consists," for we were not allowed to enter it—the present incumbent sternly refusing to admit a single visitor, or to permit one, even for an instant, to peer into that family sitting-room of the Brontës, wherein were written works which have conferred immortal lustre upon this incumbent's present residence, and which will live long after he himself has mouldered down to dust, and his bran-new window-frames have rotted to decay.

The room on our right (standing as we at present are, with our backs to the church, and facing the parsonage-house), was Mr. Brontë's study; that to our left was the family sitting-room, in which Charlotte Brontë wrote "*Jane Eyre*," "*Shirley*," "*Villette*," "*The Professor*," &c.; in which Emily Brontë penned her strangely powerful "*Wuthering Heights*;" and in which the gentle Anne Brontë composed "*Agnes Grey*," and "*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*." In that room every evening, as the clock struck nine, all needlework, sewing, &c., were put aside, and the three

sisters were accustomed to read aloud to each other their various works, and then to criticise them. Many a plan for the future was mooted in that room, and after death had taken those dear sisters from her, whom Charlotte had "loved and lost awhile," she, the sole survivor, used sadly to pace this room in the evening, thinking mournfully of those sisterly voices that were stilled for ever in death, but which at that evening hour had been accustomed to discuss in it plans, alas! never to be realised on earth. Ofttimes, till far on into the night, Charlotte Brontë paced that room in a very agony of tears, listening shudderingly to the wind from the desolate moors, sighing and moaning outside, till she verily believed that the voices of her dead sisters could be heard at the door. Who does not recognise in these facts the suggestion of that famous passage in "Jane Eyre," in which Jane hears the voice of Rochester calling to her, although he was in reality many miles away? This, then, is the room which, we believe and trust, most men would look upon as almost consecrated ground, and would regard the maintaining of it in its original state in the light of a sacred trust; but which the Rev. Mr. Wade, the present incumbent of Haworth, to our mind, desecrates with his plate-glass windows! The window above the front door was that of the Brontë nursery. The front of the house looks, as we have said already, down upon the church and village; the back door of it opens at once upon the desolate moors, which stretch away uninterruptedly to Burnley, a distance of sixteen miles.

Before finally quitting the churchyard, the sexton showed us the grave of that parishioner of whom Charlotte Brontë used to tell the following story. It seems that he was a very sleuth-hound after money, had been unusually successful in all his commercial enterprises during his life, and shortly before he was seized with his last illness, had—though then in the enjoyment of the most perfect health—insured his life. Only a few months elapsed after his performing this prudential act before he was struck down by illness. It was soon clear to the village doctor that his patient's days were numbered, but the worthy M.D. felt some reluctance in communicating this direful intelligence to the sick man. At length, however, with as much delicacy as possible, the doctor mustered up courage enough to acquaint his patient with his real state. The dying man, on hearing the news—instead of being overwhelmed with dismay, as his informant had expected—nearly jumped out of bed with excitement, exclaiming triumphantly, "By Jingo! I shall do the insurance company! I always was a lucky fellow!" An amused inspection of the grave of this Haworth hero concluded our visit to the church, and we thereupon proceeded to the "Black Bull," to discuss dinner.

On entering that comfortable hostelry, we were informed by the attendant damsel that we were to be regaled upon a joint of roast beef, which, she said, had been roasting all that "nooning," *i.e.* forenoon. The "Black Bull" is the chief inn at Haworth, and, truth to tell, is a most comfortable house of refreshment for both man and beast. The viands are excellent, the attendance good, and the charges moderate. Being ushered into the comfortable parlour—its bright fire and crimson hangings contrasting pleasantly with the snow outside—we were shown a comfortable, old-fashioned, round arm-chair, in which our landlady told us that Branwell Brontë had often sat, and often sat, alas! too long.

Mrs. Gaskell, in her "Life of Charlotte Brontë," stated that one reason of Branwell Brontë's having so early contracted those habits of intoxication which blighted his career, was to be found in the fact, that when a traveller for a commercial house came to stay at Haworth for the night, and complained of the dulness of the place, the host of the "Black Bull" would then send up to the parsonage, "with the traveller's compliments," and beg Mr. Branwell to come down to the inn and spend an hour or two there. The sexton, however, informed us that this statement was quite untrue. "Mrs. Gaskell," said he, "went too far there." The host of the "Black Bull" had never thus sent for Branwell; "for," as the sexton observed grimly, "he (Branwell) never wanted no sending for, he went fast enough of himself."

After dinner at the "Black Bull," we resolved to take a walk upon the moors, although they were more than a foot deep in snow. Crossing, therefore, the churchyard, we struck into the narrow path which ascends from it on to the moors, and up which, the sexton told us, the Brontë family, and their dogs, had so often passed before us. The path is at first narrow, ascending between two stone walls. An evidence of the bleakness of the place, and consequent want of trees, may be found in the fact that the stiles which cross this path are made of flat slabs of stone. Not a single wooden one could we see. Not the least change has taken place in this road since the Brontë girls last swept up it, nigh twenty years ago. Proceeding perhaps two hundred yards along this path, we reached a point where another road struck off to the right. Presuming that this would lead us right out on to the moors, we followed it, and, sure enough, after two minutes scrambling, we found ourselves right out on the wide spreading moors, and were looking down—despite its elevated position—upon Haworth Church, which lay directly at our feet. The appearance presented by this wide-spreading, snow-covered expanse of wild moorland, stretching away and away in a west-north-west direction, in unbroken continuity, far as the eye could reach, was very striking. The wind blew

across these moors on that January winter's day, fiercely, coldly, but right gloriously. As it hurried past, its music thrilled us and made us feel strong with a reinforced strength. As we felt our veins tingle under its life-giving influence, we ceased to wonder why a girl of Emily Brontë's temperament found her only enjoyment in life to consist in taking long solitary walks on these moors, and that when separated from them she sickened and pined away. To her, the smallest sprig of heather on these moors was more beautiful than the fairest flower. When the Rev. Mr. Brontë first came to Haworth, he used also to take long walks on these moors, and often saw eagles sweeping "in their pride and ample pinion" across them, seeking for their prey. No eagles now are ever seen, for in truth many a long year has elapsed since the last one sailed majestically away. Wading often knee-deep in snow, we struggled on against the mighty wind until we reached a pinnacle of rock, placed on the crest of one of the undulations of the moors, and commanding a wide-spreading view of the whole country around for many miles. Somewhere on these moors, about two miles from Haworth, are certain falls of water, which were a favourite haunt of the Brontës, and which, by common consent, now receive the name of the "Brontë Falls." We should have much liked to have visited them, but, as our ideas of their whereabouts were none of the clearest, as, moreover, the snow-covered moors stretched around us for miles, and as, finally, the darkness of a wintry January afternoon was fast beginning to close around us, we were compelled, by force of circumstances, to give up our idea and retrace our steps. We contrived this time to make our descent from the moors so as to come down upon the back of Haworth Parsonage. In so doing, we got, through a hollow in the moors, such a glorious glimpse of Haworth Church as Mr. Ruskin would have called "very precious."

We were rejoiced to see, on reaching the back of the parsonage, that it is left in precisely the same state as when the Brontës occupied the house. No hideous new windows spoil the effect of its weather-worn walls, scarred and marked as they are by the tempests and storms of the last hundred years. There we could still see the old kitchen in which the Brontë girls in their childhood had so often sat; in which, when grown up, they performed their regular round of household duties; in which poor faithful old Tabby, their servant, ministered for so many years to their wants, and "did the duty which lay nearest her," in the place God put her.

These musings of ours were, however, compelled to be cut short by the recollection of the fact that we had but an hour-and-a-half left wherein to walk the four miles which intervene between Haworth and Keighley, and to catch at Keighley the return up-train

to London. My friend and I, therefore, hastily descended the slippery, perpendicular village street, and turned our backs reluctantly upon the home of the Brontës. And as, amid the fast-gathering darkness of that winter's night, we walked back to Keighley, we thought sadly of those lights of genius that had burned so brightly—only a few short years ago—in that lone parsonage-house, situate amongst the solitary hills, but whose radiance has now been quenched for ever in the awful silence and still darker night of Death!

W. H. COOKE, B.A. .



THE HYGIENE OF GYMNASTICS

THAT the development of a taste for manly exercises has conduced to a diminution of certain habits of excess, is a point that barely admits of argument, so conclusive are the proofs that might be brought forward in favour of such a proposition. Our danger is now more on the side of undue attention to athletic sports to the neglect of equally or more important objects; and we are not surprised to find strenuous opposition started by intellectual and clever observers to the increasing desire that is exhibited to perform and witness feats of strength and agility, which have more of their attraction in mere difficulty and danger than in any healthful and satisfactory result. After all, it is perhaps but little known what the word "gymnastics" really means, and it would be very wrong to judge of the value of athletic exercises by the "theatrical gymnastics"—for such they may be called—that we are accustomed to see at the present time. Truly might an observer of a man walking on a ceiling, or bending backwards from a chair on to the floor, exclaim, "What is the good of all this?"

It is well to admire the wonderful nerve that must be present in the man who walks a rope over the great cataract, and the energy and endurance necessary to run eleven miles in an hour, or turn innumerable somersaults. These are, however, not true gymnastics; they are the amusement of an hour, and tend to no advantage, mental or physical. No one has more fully recognised the defects of such entertainments than the professed gymnast himself, and methods without end have been devised to avoid any evils arising from the study of athletic sports, and to obtain the real benefits which, without doubt, are associated with their proper employment. The simple signification of the word "gymnastics" (naked) would embrace all employment or exercise indulged in whilst undressed or slightly clothed; and although modern lexicographers would fail in thus explaining the term, it is quite a fair interpretation of the original word. This is not, however, to our mind, quite a sufficiently precise definition, and for this reason: mere exercise, if taken voluntarily by an individual, in almost all cases resolves itself into an use of certain muscles and organs which are already in a healthy and strong condition. It does not, as a rule, tend to the general development of the organisation, and the improvement of any deficiencies. A cricketer is not, as a rule, fond of racing, nor a swimmer of pedestrianism. Each takes his exercise in his own way, but fails often in producing a general healthy result.

Exercises have therefore been divided into two classes—*recreative*

and *systematised*. It is the latter division that more properly comes under the term gymnastics, or, to put a shorter and yet equally expressive translation, we would say that gymnastics are exercises "for their own sake." Taken in this light, therefore, it is a matter of great interest to see how such exercise influences the body, and how the best results are to be obtained from such employment. That the blood is the source of nourishment to the entire body will be admitted, and it is therefore certain that where the circulation of this fluid is carried out to the greatest degree, extra development must ensue. Exercise of any portion of the body increases the circulation, and thus adds to its development.

This exercise should be so regulated that the *physique* may be uniformly advanced and strengthened, at the same time so apportioned that exhaustion and fatigue may not occur. Really sound physiological training would embrace both these points, and there is no doubt but that many of the hurtful practices in connection with this preparation for powerful exertion have latterly been discarded.

Mr. Maclaren has published an excellent work on the "Theory and Practice of Training," in which very sound principle are enunciated and most valuable advice given; and although there are yet remaining some defects in regard to one or two matters, it is without doubt the best guide for anyone wishing to attain athletic power and muscular tonicity.

Physical education is undoubtedly of the greatest value to mankind, not only as far as its own direct influence is concerned on the health and natural existence, but as an adjunct to mental advancement and culture. The old motto, "*mens sana in corpore sano*," so often repeated in our schoolrooms, is but too lightly thought of in many modern systems of education, and their relationship is overlooked by many parents in their anxiety for extra talented and precocious offspring. And, further, if it is granted that physical education is advantageous, perhaps to some even as important as mental culture, it should not be left to chance, but a special scientific training should be employed symmetrically to develop each portion of that exceedingly compound machine—the human body.

Our present systems of gymnastics, as generally carried out, do not deal sufficiently in these general principles, and, like the drill to which the raw recruit is undeviatingly submitted, regardless of individual peculiarities, so we find certain systems and exercises automatically performed and religiously adhered to in our public schools and gymnasias. Too much stress cannot be laid upon the necessity there is to individualise each pupil in the course of physical tuition; and there seems to be but little doubt that it is

the absence of this careful selection of character, constitution, and strength, that causes so much reasonable antagonism to the more general encouragement of athletic sports in our rising generation. "To go into training" should mean "to live a healthy life," and nothing more. Each boy and girl ought to be led to look upon this condition as the natural one of his or her existence, and not to regard it as a task irksome, self-denying, and extraordinary. That which is hard work to one man is always easy employment to another, and it must become injurious to one or other of them if their energies are equally taxed.

There are two forms of gymnastics now in vogue, and by this means it becomes an easy matter to apportion exercises to individuals. The division into "heavy exercises," or "gymnastics," and "light exercises," or "calisthenics," is a modern improvement, and by careful selection and admixture, it is quite feasible to benefit the weakest invalid, and also to add to the muscular power of a strong man.

Then the systems are divided, further, into rational gymnastics, which require no instruments at all. It is known by the name of "Ling's System" and the "Dio Lewis System," in which minor appliances are brought to bear, and certain arrangements entered into, by which opposite strength is brought into play as an antagonistic power. That the pupils of either of these systems will ever become entitled to the term "gymnasts," will, of course, depend upon their constitution, physical build, and perseverance; but that immense hygienic benefits may reasonably be expected, even to the most delicate and fragile form, if properly and carefully treated, has been most fully proved. What, then, are the dangers to be avoided in the physical education of our youth? and how are the benefits acknowledged to belong to such instruction the more easily and certainly to be obtained? In considering this matter, the ordinary term "training" is not acknowledged as an example of physical education. "The French language in twelve lessons" would not be considered as a portion of any scholastic arrangement, and therefore we cannot accept the injurious haste and excessive exertion necessary to bring a body into a given condition within a certain period as a specimen of our discipline. We will point out hereafter how we consider "training" acts injuriously.

Generalisations are dangerous, more especially when they refer to matters affecting our body and life; and as no two beings were ever similar, it points out one important fact at the start: and that is, that great care should be exercised in the primary examination of young persons about to undertake a course of physical education. In a recent number of the "Lancet" there is this short but most interesting sentence:—"While exercise, properly so called, tends

to development and health, excessive exertion produces debility and decay." In a report from Deputy-Inspector-General Bradford, the surgeon in charge of the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, published in the "Medical Blue Book" for 1864, we have this statement:—"There are, moreover (amongst the cadets) always some of feeble frame, with ill-developed chests, the children, probably, of unhealthy parents, or who have, in hot climates or elsewhere, been the subjects of disease or accident during childhood. It is often found to be necessary to exempt such from the gymnastic exercises." Now this, to our mind, is a mistaken view of the object of such a course of instruction. The regulated amount and character of work should be apportioned to these very feeble, ill-developed youths; for if gymnastics or calisthenics are the beneficial and curative agents which we suppose, here are the identical subjects for operation. What more rational than to encourage, in instances such as these, the careful use of the "free exercises" of Schreber. Take, for example, those affecting the muscles of the chest and back. Shoulder-lifting, raising the arms sideways, swinging the arms backwards, rubbing the hands together without bending the elbows, and numerous other simple movements, without apparatus, which tend to expand and develop the chest. A boy is not breathing freely: what more likely to encourage freedom of lung-play than this simple motion: "Bend the body sidewise as far as possible, with one hand on the side of the chest towards which you are bending, and the other raised and placed on your head. Take five deep breaths while thus placed." Will not every inspiratory muscle on that side be put in force and exercised? Must not development necessarily ensue? If five breaths cannot be taken, three may; for it is essential to recollect that under no circumstances the patient should be allowed to become tired.

To omit exercises altogether, is simply to leave the evil alone to progress as it will, and, at the same time, to ignore the very essence and marrow of a system of physical education. There can be no condition that may not be improved more or less by careful passive or active use. It is in this very particular that the great advantages of the "ring exercises" of Dr. Lewis of Boston, stand out so prominently.

There can be no chance of over-exertion in the fairly balanced strength of equally matched opponents. As he himself has said: "If a man were as strong as Samson, he would find in the use of these simple rings with another man of equal strength, the fullest opportunity to exert his utmost strength; while the frailest child, engaged with his fellow, would never be injured." Such, we take it, are truly hygienic gymnastics.

Another most important consideration in the matter of physical

education is the association there is between food and work. Here it is that we find the injury has arisen in the regulated system of training that has been so long in use amongst professional athletes. It is quite true that exercise, and a certain form of diet, will reduce the weight of a man. We have seen this carried into a perfect fanaticism in the case of Mr. Banting, who formed his system on this principle, but was yet unmindful of the great fact that frequently in reducing the bulk you sacrifice the muscular energy and vital force. Both in training and in the reduction of obesity, it is one tissue and one substance that is to be affected—the fat must be used up and removed, whilst the muscular power is untouched. The moment you interfere with that, vital force diminishes, and you lose ground as far as activity and strength are concerned. The diet for a man in training should be sufficient for his wants, but no more; it should be so apportioned that any muscular deficiencies are made up, whilst extraneous deposits already existing in the system are used by the extra exertion indulged in. The rules of ordinary hygiene apply here exactly. It is doubtless this mistaken notion as to diet, coupled with the extraordinary exercise that is put upon professional men, that ultimately tells so fatally upon them, and shortens their lives in the manner that statistics have proved.

Pantomimists and acrobats are short-lived people, and although, doubtless, other extravagances and temptations assist in thus producing an evil result, it is not to be denied that the want of sufficient knowledge as to the relation between food of a certain character and quantity, and exertion of a severe kind, has, in many instances, laid the foundation of disease, and been the primary cause of an early dissolution. If, then, we would obtain advantage from exertion, the individual requirements of food and support need particular attention. Perhaps in no way have the old rules of diet been so erroneous as in those which limit the supply of fluid. We speak now as to *quantity*, and not as to *quality*. A certain waste must occur during excessive exertion, and unless that be supplied from *without*, the fluids of the body are interfered with, producing, doubtless, a reduction in weight, but, at the same time, thickening the blood, wasting the muscle which is dependent to a great extent upon fluid for its function, and deranging the entire organisation. Again, as all exertion increases respiration, it becomes an important matter to supply a proper amount of fresh air. For this reason it would certainly be better if all gymnastic exercises were taken in the open air, and the plan of building gymnasia is open to very serious and strong objections. Should, however, such an arrangement be necessary, the freest ventilation should be insisted on, and a particular freedom from dust enforced. One other matter, which may be considered a trivial one, and yet

which is very influential for good or evil, is the clothing that is worn during the course of instruction. Loose flannel clothes are in every way suitable, and particularly is it necessary that ample space be afforded about the chest and shoulders.

Although to some minds the minutiae of fresh air and suitable attire may seem somewhat overdrawn, it is nevertheless by attention to such matters that evils are avoided, and benefits enhanced, if not even directly produced. We see this, perhaps, more clearly brought out when we come to consider the effects of a course of gymnastic instruction on a body of men like those in our army, who are, as far as possible, subjected to similar influences, and are, in one common mass, treated, fed, clothed, and housed alike. Relations between a military life and the employment of athletic exercises are not of recent origin, for we find both Greeks and Romans recognising the advantages that accrue from a course of physical education. In some matters the ancient people were far ahead of us, and perhaps in our later inventions of gunpowder and machinery we have not derived so much personal advantage as at first sight might be supposed. As Englishmen, we have certainly been very much behind in these matters, for it is within a very recent period that a system of gymnastics has formed a portion of the soldier's training, whilst the Swedish and Prussian armies have for a quarter of a century recognised the importance of such an education. Suffice it to say, however, that now a systematic course of gymnastics is gone through by every recruit in the British army, and although perhaps the time has been almost too short to obtain any very satisfactory results as to the general effects of this education, yet it may be said to have succeeded in many instances. We cannot, however, shut our eyes to the fact that our soldiers are not as fine a body of men as they formerly were, that they cannot withstand the hardships and fatigues of service as they have hitherto done. It may be said in opposition to these remarks that the recruiting system has failed, that the advance of commerce and increased prosperity of agricultural and other pursuits have detained the better class of men who formerly enlisted. That is certainly true; but we would take as our stand the sick-roll and invaliding lists, and we would point out the alarming increase in men who are found unfit for further service before they have completed their third year of military life—nay, some even with as many months; and we would ask, How has it arisen? If this three months' gymnastic course is of the benefit we imagine it should be, how can it be that men who have been through it break down so shortly after? Is that to be blamed to the constitution of the men, or is it not rather more worth our while to look into the way in which our military gymnastics are carried out? Is there that careful individual selec-

tion that seems so essential amongst a body of men? After a recruit is passed fit by a medical man, is any further notice bestowed upon him? We understand that he forms one of a squad who perform a certain routine course of exercises, and having "gone through," take up their places in the ranks. Rules are undoubtedly framed upon the soundest principles, and with the best objects, but that is the very objection we have at starting. We would wish to see more individual inspection and training, and less of formality and regulation. Mr. Maclaren's book is doubtless very sound and sensible, but we would do away as much as possible with routine and system, in so far as the first part of the physical education is concerned; and until, by careful observation, we had obtained a number of similarly constituted frames and constitutions to treat, we would rather see the lighter exercises encouraged, which, as far as our knowledge goes, are rarely given in our military gymnasia.

Dr. Parkes, in his admirable work on "Hygiene," dwells strongly on the duties of the officer in the gymnasium, and if his advice were stringently followed we think immense benefits would speedily result. This paragraph contains the soundest advice:—

"One very important part in gymnastic training depends on the instructor. A good instructor varies the work constantly, and never urges a man to undue and repeated exertion. If the particular exercise cannot be done by any man, it should be left for the time The grand rule for an instructor, then, is, change of work and *sufficient rest*."

We cannot help feeling that in many of our large gymnasia the principle of "kill or cure" has obtained some footing, and that too much stress is laid upon a systematised course of instruction. Further, it is well to remember that the whole of a soldier's life is a series of gymnastic performances. What other class of labour can drill, marching, and parading come under? And here we would fain see the selective plan carried on also. We have the idea that much injury is caused by the sudden accession of these duties to a young soldier, coming as they do altogether. The recruit, after he is "licked into shape" somewhat by some preliminary movements, is clothed and armed at one time in every respect like an old soldier, and he is expected to go through the same amount of exertion, carrying the same weight, and yet quite unaccustomed to such employment. The same tunic buttons up his growing frame, and the same belts encircle his chest, and confine his arms.

To carry out the sound principles of hygienic gymnastics, we imagine these matters should be gradually progressive, and that over a certain space of time, say one or two years, the recruit should be gradually preparing for that condition unto which, according to our present system, he is thrust in as many months. We

would suggest at least two divisions—the recruit clothed—the recruit clothed and accoutred.

Our army is an expensive luxury, and each member of that large body is worth consideration. Any suggestions, therefore, that would tend in the slightest to diminish sickness and invaliding amongst our young soldiers is worthy of more than a passing notice. Feeling this, the foregoing remarks have been hazarded—not with the slightest wish to meddle in present arrangements, but merely as leading to some considerations that are apparently of consequence and utility. As a general subject, it can only be again urged upon us as a nation, how beneficial a more thorough attention to physical education would prove; and that with such a desire for gymnastic sports and athletic exercises as that we now see springing up around us, it is yet highly necessary that our fancies should be curbed by a careful individual selection, and regulated by a truly hygienic line of conduct.

J. J. P.

THE CAPITAL OF ITALY

THE city which, from its humble beginning on the Palatine Hill, rose so rapidly to power and greatness till it became not only the capital of Italy but the metropolis of the world, can boast of a history surpassing that of all other cities in the universe. The long chain of Roman triumphs under the Republic and the Empire, the lustre of its arms, the prowess of its soldiers, the wealth of its citizens, invested the city of the Seven Hills with a halo of glory which all the story of its decline has been utterly powerless to efface: and the eager craving of the modern Italians for the possession of the old historic city owes its origin as much to the traditions of its former splendour as to the intolerance of a priestly government. That the cry of "Rome or Death," so lately raised by Garibaldi, represents, indeed, the fierce desire of Italy for the completion of the kingdom, cannot for a moment be doubted. And though there may be many among the politicians of the Florentine Court who are prepared to wait for more peaceable ways of gaining their capital, their wish is none the less ardent; and it is only in their opinions of expediency that difference exists among the various members of the newly-emancipated race.

The question then arises, how the city which once gave laws to Italy and the world has fallen under the sway of the Pope-king, and how it has come to pass that the possession of Rome should be the subject of angry contention between the monarch of the rising kingdom and the ruler of the great military nation of the Continent.

The modern history of Italy may be dated from the fall of the Western Empire in the fifth century, when the last feeble representative of the line of Roman emperors was deposed by his German guards, and their leader assumed the sovereignty of the Roman dominions, with the title of King of Italy. For nearly a century the power of the city seemed, indeed, to have been almost entirely destroyed, and it fell an easy prey to the barbarian leaders who successively invaded the peninsula; and so impressed were the emperors of the East with the political decay of Rome, that when for a time Italy was reduced under the sway of the Byzantine Court, the seat of government was actually fixed at Ravenna. The irruption of the Lombards, however, under their king, Astulphus, brought a new actor upon the political scene. This was the Bishop of Rome, who, whilst the city had been left to the government of the nobles, had gradually usurped a considerable portion of power; and who now, in order to check the designs of the Lombards upon the city, summoned to his aid Pepin, the King of Franks. This

monarch not only readily responded to the summons, but compelled the Lombards to cede territories to the Pope. Charlemagne subsequently confirmed the gift of territory, and, moreover, intervened to rescue Pope Leo from the hands of his own rebellious subjects.

For nearly two centuries Italy remained in a state closely bordering upon anarchy: during which time Rome, though nominally subject to the emperor who ruled at Constantinople, was really independent, and governed in full sovereignty by the Pope.

In the year 962, Otho I., King of Germany, crossed the Alps; and, entering Rome, caused himself there to be proclaimed Emperor of the Romans, Augustus, and Supreme Head of the Church. But the rise of the German power proved highly injurious to the pretensions of the Pontiff; for this same Otho subsequently deposed the Pope Leo VIII., and caused himself to be crowned King of Italy. This kingdom he transmitted to his German successors; and the whole of northern Italy thus for some time fell under the sway of the Germans. During the latter half of the tenth century, and the beginning of the eleventh, the country was distracted by the fierce contests of rival factions, and there could be said to be no "capital" at all. And it must, moreover, be noticed that during this time the southern districts were successively seized upon by various bands of invaders; the Normans, in the eleventh century, making themselves masters of Naples and Sicily, and receiving encouragement and recognition from the Pope.

The supremacy claimed, and often successfully maintained, in Italy by the German monarchs who had assumed the title of Emperor of the Romans, completely overshadowed the power of the local dukes and princes, and it was not till Hildebrand assumed the papal dignity under the title of Gregory VII. that the position of the Holy See began to be recognised and felt in Europe as a temporal power. The long minority of Henry IV. of Germany and the revolt of the Saxons gave the Popes opportunity which they needed; and under the rule of Alexander, and Gregory (Hildebrand) his successor, the power of the Papacy had made such rapid strides that the Pope summoned the emperor himself to Rome, to answer the charges brought against him by the Saxons. Succeeding emperors struggled in vain against succeeding popes to wrest from them the power which they had usurped; and in 1125, Henry V. not only yielded the right of investiture of bishops and other ecclesiastical points of dispute, but himself did homage to Pope Innocent II., and received his crown kneeling before the footstool of the pontiff.

Italy still remained split up into small states, which espoused variously the cause of emperor or pope, and the name of Guelphs and Ghibelines were given to the partisans of the rival factions. Till

THE CAPITAL OF ITALY

the middle of the fourteenth century Rome continued, through the Pope, to extend its power, and though not actually styled or recognised as the capital of Italy, was, beyond all doubt, the leading city of the peninsula.

The temporary transfer of the seat of the papacy from Rome to Avignon, in the fourteenth century, offered to the people of the former city an opportunity which they were not slow to seize. In 1347 Rienzi erected a republic, and endeavoured to subject the various states of Italy to the sway of Rome; but the nobles soon became jealous of the power and influence which the popular tribune had obtained, and after having been once banished for seven years, and again restored to power, he was at length slain in an insurrection, fomented by the patrician classes of the city. The return of the popes to their original seat was accompanied also by the return of the power which they had lost, though in a somewhat impaired form. And in the following century we find the German emperor and the kings of France and Spain contending among themselves for the possession of the peninsula. In 1494 a French army, under Charles VIII., invaded Italy, and soon made themselves masters of Rome, Florence, and Naples. But so great was the alarm raised by these conquests that a league was formed by the Italian states for the expulsion of the "foreigners," and, though the Venetians suffered heavily at the hands of the invaders, the independence of the country was maintained, and Charles was compelled to abandon nearly the whole of his acquisitions. The endeavours of the French armies were then directed towards the conquest of the northern duchy of Milan, but though they gained several great successes they were totally defeated at the Battle of Bicocca, in 1522, and were finally expelled from the duchy.

During the whole of the sixteenth century the Italian princes were continually engaged in the formation of leagues either with the emperor or the French, by means of which they succeeded in playing one off against the other, and so holding them both in check. The principal states into which Italy was at that time divided were the Republic of Venice, the Republic of Florence, the States of the duchy of Milan, and the kingdom of Naples, and these continued, with little variation, to be the recognised divisions of the country till the end of the eighteenth century, when a new era dawned upon the whole of the continent of Europe.

The nineteenth century, without doubt, may be fixed as the commencement of an entirely new chapter in the history of Italian politics. The extraordinary events which followed in such rapid succession upon the French Revolution were speedily attended by their results in the several states of the peninsula; and ere the first ten years of the century had passed, we find all the old governments

swept away ; and after a short interval, in which the various states were remodelled after the fashion of the French republic, the whole of northern Italy was united under the sway of Napoleon, who placed the iron crown of the Lombards upon his head in the city of Milan, and assumed the title of King of Italy, thus reviving a dignity which had been in abeyance for centuries. The Pope himself was carried off as a prisoner to France, and the only part of the peninsula which was not incorporated in the newly-created kingdom was Naples, which, however, was conquered from the Bourbons, and given successively to Joseph Bonaparte and Murat. It is to be noticed, however, that Napoleon, when assuming the title of King of Italy, promised his new subjects that they should not be incorporated with France, and soon after appointed Eugène Beauharnais as viceroy of the kingdom.

This short period, during which the Italians were ruled by the viceroy, was the first instance of anything approaching to national unity that had occurred for the space of nearly a thousand years. And though their existence as a nation was short-lived, the effects of it remained in the country long after the ephemeral kingdom had been swept away, and caused the Italians, more than any other people in Europe, to be dissatisfied with the arrangements that were made by the allied powers at the Congress of Vienna. The Italian troops, under Eugène, rendered good service to Napoleon during some of his campaigns ; and though the whole of Upper Italy had been evacuated by the French after the first fall of Napoleon in 1814, his escape from Elba was the signal for Murat to raise the standard of independence in the peninsula, and to endeavour, by uniting both Northern and Southern Italy under his sceptre, to bring substantial aid to his kinsman. But the attempt was utterly futile ; and the only result of the war, for Italy, was that the Bourbons again recovered their throne at Naples.

But the kingdom of Italy, though the offspring of Napoleon's ambition, rather than a national movement, left its mark upon the people. Though blotted from the map of Europe, it remained indelibly impressed upon the minds of the Italians ; and the first dim idea of a free and independent monarchy, comprising within its limits the whole of the states of the peninsula, and with the old imperial city of Rome for its capital, began to dawn in the minds of men. But there were obstacles which even to the most sanguine temperament must have appeared little short of insurmountable. There was the whole army of petty dukes and princes, and the power of the Austrians in the background, to repress the slightest symptom of discontent. There was the question as to the prince who should be called upon to rule over them ; and the great difficulty of the Pope's temporal power at Rome. And lastly, there was

the fact that Italy had been for nearly a thousand years divided into several distinct and independent principalities; that the people of these various states had been for ages enemies and rivals of each other, rather than friends and allies; and that each was bitterly jealous of the ascendancy of another.

But the age of revolutions had thoroughly changed the notions of the rising generation in the peninsula; and the spread of liberal ideas throughout Europe fired the Italians with a desire to shake off the domination of the Austrians, and to erect upon the ruins of the principalities a kingdom which should take its place among the great powers of the Continent. But the reaction which succeeded the overthrow of Napoleon's power was in no way favourable to the hopes of the nationalities: and the days of The Holy Alliance were days of bitterness and mourning for the patriots of Italy. Again and again did the oppressed subjects of the Italian princes rear the standard of rebellion: again and again the bayonets of the Austrians swept away the vanguard of insurrection. The French Revolution of 1830 was followed by similar movements throughout the whole of Northern Italy; but they were in every instance abortive, and among the victims who perished was the brother of the present Emperor of the French.

The year 1848, which witnessed outbreaks in nearly every capital of Europe, was not likely to be a year of peace in Italy. The King of Sardinia raised the standard of the independence of Italy, and for a time everything went well. From one city to another he drove the Austrians, till nearly the whole of Lombardy was occupied by his army, and already the idea of concession was entertained by the emperor. Negotiations were actually set on foot with a view to the surrender of Lombardy to the King of Sardinia; and to raise still higher the hopes of the young patriots, the Pope himself had declared for the people, and against the Austrians; and a Roman army of 20,000 men had actually marched to co-operate with the Sardinians. But diplomacy was slow, and the march of Radetzky was quick. The Roman army capitulated. The Neapolitans abandoned the cause, and Charles Albert was driven headlong from the Austrian territory; and the beginning of the next year saw the hopes of Italy crushed by the crowning blow at Novara. Meanwhile the Pope had repented of the liberal step which he had taken. He abandoned the city, and fled to Gaeta, while Rome was ruled by the Republican triumvirate. The capture of the city by the French army finished the work of repression. The last spark of insurrection was stamped out; the rule of tyranny was re-established.

The crusade of Napoleon III., in favour of the Italian independence, called into new life all the hopes which had so long been

crushed and dead. The bloody conflicts of Magenta and Solferino shattered for ever the power of the Austrians in Italy; and the genius of Cavour gathered for the Sardinian monarch the fruits of the success of the allied arms. One by one the provinces gravitated to the centre of independence, and the triumphant march of Garibaldi through Calabria, and the rout of Lamoricière's reactionary troops at Castel-Fidardo, placed the crown of Italy upon Victor Emmanuel's head. The project of a confederacy was scouted by the nation at large: and "Unity" became the watch-word of the day. The rout of Sadowa again aided the cause of Italian freedom, and Venice was the share of the Austrian spoils which fell to the lot of the new kingdom. It has been often laid as a reproach to Italy that she has gained her independence by the aid of foreign arms. Let those who bring this charge remember that the flower of the Austrian army was encountered by the Italians at Custozza; and that but for the invasion of the Venetian state, Sadowa might have been an Austrian triumph, instead of a disaster. Let it be remembered, too, that Italy suffered under the great disadvantage of being placed between two great military powers, neither of whom was ever very favourable to the cause of her independence; that her troops are young and unseasoned, but even by her enemies their bravery and gallantry on the field of Custozza was freely admitted.

The only thing now needed to crown the fabric of Italian unity is the possession of Rome. In spite of the violent invectives of Garibaldi at Geneva, it is beyond all doubt that the Italians generally are animated with no hostile feelings towards the Holy See in its religious character. It is the temporal power which they are so eager to sweep away. The presence of the French garrison is the one great grievance of the whole nation; and the withdrawal even of that garrison on the conditions imposed by the September convention is worse than a mockery, when it is publicly known that the Antibes Legion is but really the advanced guard of France. It is not, perhaps, extraordinary that the Pope should decline to surrender the power which he possesses; and it may, perhaps, be true that the Italians wish for Rome more eagerly than Rome wishes for the kingdom. It is difficult to form a clear conception of the real feelings which animate the Roman population. One fact, however, is significant—the Garibaldian bands met with little or no encouragement, while the presence of the royal troops was the immediate signal for the "vote of annexation." The remark frequently made, that Rome never has been the capital of united Italy, is quite beside the mark. Rome is the only city to which all the provincial capitals would unhesitatingly yield precedence. Many who object strongly to being governed from Florence would cheerfully accept

the supremacy of Rome. The Pope himself would exchange a position of nominal independence, but of really utter subservience to France, for a national position; and he would be as safe and more honoured if the troops of Napoleon were replaced by the battalions of Victor Emmanuel.

One thing, however, is certain: the temporal power of the Papacy is doomed; its fall is a mere question of time. It will be impossible for France to persist in a course which can only have the effect of holding Italy in check till the power of the nation shall have been recruited. There is but the life of one man between Italy and her capital. No new generation of Frenchmen will undertake a new crusade in behalf of the temporal power of the popes; and if once the certainty of French intervention be removed, the standards of Italy will speedily be planted on the Capitol of Rome.

MARK SHATTOCK.

CHRISTMAS

"Oh ! happy time of loving tender faces,
 Of old friends gathering at old meeting places,
 Of bright sweet eyes, and all-delightful bliases,
 Of soft-love whispers, and of stolen kisses !
 Oh ! happy time, when Earth, a grey-beard jolly,
 Lifts his proud wreath of mistletoe and holly ;
 When yule-logs crack on the hearth, and fleet
 Glide past the rosy hours with winged feet ;
 When Christmas-bells fling out their silvery chimes,
 A song of welcome to the Christmas times !"

Of the seasons of the year, Christmas-tide is distinguished from all others by the solemnity of the mission with which it is associated ; and when we meditate on the spiritual blessings with which the festivity of Christmas is connected, it fills our thoughts and aspirations, our feelings and emotions, with a holier fervour, and raises our spirits to a purer and loftier state of enjoyment. There is also something sacred in the recollection that all mankind, both rich and poor, old and young, learned and unlearned, prince and peasant, are all alike equally interested in this season of the year ; and if any external rite can proclaim that God is no respecter of persons, surely Christmas doth so.

Of all the old festivals and customs in England, that of Christmas awakens the strongest and most heartfelt associations. It is the time for the gathering together of family connections, when parents and children, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends long separated, meet again once more about the social fire-sides of their own homes, there to grow young and loving again amongst the old familiar haunts of childhood.

There is also something in the very season of the year that gives a charm to the festivities of Christmas. At other periods of the year we derive a great portion of our pleasures from the mere beauties of nature. In spring we wander forth and listen to the song of the birds, the murmuring of the stream, and inhale the fragrance of a thousand flowers. In the soft voluptuousness of summer, or the golden pomp of autumn, our feelings sally forth and spread themselves o'er the glorious landscape, in and out the shady country lanes, by fields of golden corn and bearded barley, that bow down their ripening heads to the soft wooing of the balmy summer winds. And when we look o'erhead and watch the deep, delicious blue clouds as they roll along under the canopy of the heavens, in all their changeeful magnificence, or when we watch the blood-red sun sink into the earth, shedding a mellow glow o'er the face of all nature, 'tis then we revel in the luxury of mere

sensation. Who has witnessed the glories of an autumnal sunset, and has not felt the luxury of a mute and exquisite delight? But in the depth of winter, when the trees are stripped of their foliage—when all the streams are ice-bound and the earth is covered with a crisp white coat of frost—when all our feathered songsters have left us for a sunnier clime—when everything is hushed and still—when Nature lies despoiled of every charm, and wraps herself up in a shroud of ice and snow,—’tis then, in the short, dark, gloomy days and long, foggy, darksome, cold nights of winter, that we turn for our gratification to indoor amusements; and while they circumscribe our wanderings, shut in our feelings also from rambling abroad, and make us more keenly sensible of the pleasures of the social fire-side circle. Not that we would say old King Winter has not any of Nature’s charms or beautiful features. If we said so we should be wrong; for, as the poet says—

“The seasons are my friends—companions dear!
 Hale Winter will I tend with constant feet,
 When o’er wold and desert, lake and mere,
 He sails triumphant in a rack of sleet,
 With his rude joy the russet earth to greet,
 Pinching the tiny brook and infant ferry;
 And I will hear him on his mountain seat,
 Shouting his boisterous carol free and merry,
 Crown’d with a Christmas wreath of holly-berry.”

In winter our thoughts are more concentrated; our friendly sympathies more aroused. We feel more sensibly the charm of each other’s society, and are brought more closely together by dependence on each other for enjoyment.

From the great prevalence of rural habits through every class of society, we English have always been fond of those festivals and holidays which interrupt the monotony of our business life. We all recognise in Christmas a time of rejoicing; but in order to understand the importance of this annual festival, we must recollect that human beings, both as to body and mind, need seasons of relaxation from the ordinary toil, fatigue, and care of our every-day life, or that, in the words of a quaint but true old proverb—

“All work and no play
 Makes Jack a dull boy.”

And, we think, our ancestors thought so too, and were most particularly observant of the religious and social rites of Christmas.

It is amusing to read over the details which some antiquarians have given of the quaint humours, the burlesque pageants, and the complete abandonment to mirth and good-fellowship with which

this festival was celebrated in days gone by. A few lines from an old song will not be out of place here :—

“A man might then behold,
At Christmas, in each hall,
Good fires to curb the cold,
And meat for great and small.
The neighbours were friendly bidden,
And all had welcome true;
The poor from the gates were not chidden,
When this old cap was new.”

Christmas in those days seemed to throw open every door and to unlock every heart. It brought the peasant and peer together, and blended all ranks in one warm generous flow of joy and kindness.

“Then open wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all.
Power laid his rod of rule aside;
And ceremony doffed his pride.

The heir with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose.”—SCOTT.

The geniality and joyousness of Christmas time in England has long been a national characteristic (and we hope it may long remain such), and for a picture of it in the olden times, we can desire none more graphic than that furnished by Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion* :—

“On Christmas-eve the bells were rung !
On Christmas-eve the mass was sung !
That only night in all the year
Saw the stole'd priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donn'd her kistie sheen ;
The hall was dress'd with holly green ;
Forth to the woods did merry men go,
To gather in the mistletoe.

The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide ;
The huge hall table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone, the days to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn,
By old blue-coated serving-man ;
Then the grim boar's head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell,
How, when, and where the monster fell !
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baitings of the boar.
The wassail round, in good brown bowls,
Garnish'd with ribbons, blithely trowls.
Then the huge sirloin reeked : hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie ;

Nor failed old Scotland to produce
 At such high-tide her savoury goose.
 Then came the merry masquers in,
 And carols roared with blithesome din ;
 If unmelodious was the song,
 It was a hearty note and strong.
 Who lists may in their mumming see
 Traces of ancient mystery ;
 White shirts supplied the masquerade,
 And smutted cheeks the visiors made ;
 But, oh ! what masquers, richly dight,
 Can boast of blossoms half so light ?
 England was merry England, when
 Old Christmas brought her sports again.
 'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale ;
 'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale !
 A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
 The poor man's heart through half the year."

And also, in connexion with the burning of the yule-log on Christmas-eve, we may quote a few lines from Herrick's inspiring stanzas :—

"Come, bring with a noise,
 My merry, merry boys,
 The Christmas log to the firing ;
 While my good dame she
 Bids ye all be free,
 And drink to your heart's desiring !

With the last year's brand,
 Light the new block, and
 For good success in his spending,
 On your psalteries play,
 That sweet luck may
 Come while the log is a teending."

Drink now the strong beer,
 Cut the white loaf here,
 The while the meat is a shredding ;
 For the rare mince-pie,
 And the plums stand by,
 To fill the paste that's a kneading."

The allusion, at the commencement of the second stanza, is to a practice of laying aside the half-consumed block, after having served its purpose on Christmas-eve, preserving it carefully in some secure place till the next anniversary of Christmas, and then lighting the new log with the charred remains of its predecessor. The due observance of this season was deemed of the highest importance, and it was believed that the preservation of last year's Christmas log was a most effectual security to the house against fire.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the old halls, castles, and manor-houses resounded with the harp and Christmas carol,

and their ample boards groaned under the weight of hospitality. It may seem ridiculous to give a detailed account of the viands partaken of in those days, since they are generally known, and vary very little from the present age; but amongst the old Christmas characters assembled on those occasions I may mention the names of some of the most distinguished. First of all comes Sir-Loin Roast Beef, a most respectable personage, knighted by King James the First at Houghton Towers, in Lancashire, and a very great favourite of John Bull's. Next to him is Sultana Plum-Pudding, who is evidently a person of extensive philanthropy. She has many Oriental ingredients, in the way of spices. The next is Lady Wassail and Miss Mince-Pie, followed by Sir John Barleycorn and Sir John Roast-Apple, Madam Turkey, Mother Goose, and various members of the Fowl family, with a host of others too numerous to mention, and which are a great deal more agreeable to see and speak to than to write about.

Even the poorest cottage welcomed the season with decorations of mistletoe and holly. The bright yule-log shed its dazzling rays through the lattice, inviting the stranger to raise the latch and join the group assembled round the hearth, beguiling the long evening with legendary ballads and oft-told Christmas tales. The following verses from a psalm or carol, by George Wither, who lived in the early part of the seventeenth century, describes, with hilarious animation, the mode of keeping Christmas in his time:—

“ Now is come our joyful feast,
 Let every man be jolly;
 Each room with ivy leaves are drest,
 And every post with holly.
 Though some churls at our mirth repine,
 Round your foreheads garlands twine,
 Drown sorrow in a cup of wine,
 And let us all be merry !

Now all our neighbours chimneys smoke,
 And Christmas blocks are burning,
 Their ovens they with baked meat choke,
 And all their spits are turning,
 Without the door let sorrow lie;
 And if for cold it hap to die,
 We'll bury 't in a Christmas pie,
 And evermore be merry.

Now every lad is wond'rous trim,
 And no man minds his labour;
 Our lasses have provided them
 A bagpipe and a tabour;
 Young men and maids, and girls and boys,
 Give life to one another's joys,
 And you anon shall by their noise
 Perceive that they are merry.

Ned Squash hath fetcht his bands from pawn,
 And all his best apparel ;
 Brisk Nell hath bought a ruff of lawn,
 With the droppings of the barrel.
 And those that hardly all the year
 Had bread to eat, or rags to wear,
 Will have both c'lothes and dainty fare,
 And all the day be merry !

The client now his suit forbears,
 The prisoner's heart is eased ;
 The debtor drinks away his cares,
 And for the time is pleased.
 Though others purses be more fat,
 Why should we pine or grieve at that ?
 Hang sorrow ! care will kill a cat,
 And therefore let's be merry !

Hark ! now the wags abroad do call
 Each other forth to rambling ;
 Anon you'll see them in the hall
 For nuts and apples scrambling !
 Hark ! how the roofs with laughter sound,
 Anon they'll think the house goes round,
 For they the cellar's depth have found,
 And there they will be merry !

The wenches with their wassail-bowls
 About the streets are singing ;
 The boys are come to catch the owls,
 The wild man in it bringing ;
 Our kitchen-boy hath broke his box,
 And to the dealings of the ox
 Our honest neighbours come by flocks,
 And here they will be merry !

Then, wherefore in this merry daies,
 Should we, I pray, be duller ?
 No ! let us sing some roundelayes,
 To make our mirth the fuller !
 And, while thus inspired we sing,
 Let all the streets with echoes ring,
 Woods and hills and everything,
 Bear witness we are merry !"

Also in "Poor Robin's Almanac" for the year 1695, we find the following verses :—

"Now, thrice welcome Christmas,
 Which brings us good cheer,
 Minced-pies and plum-porridge,
 Good ale and strong beer ;
 With pig, goose, and capon,
 The best that can be ;
 So well doth the weather
 And our stomachs agree.

Observe how the chimneys
 Do smoke all about ;
 The cooks are providing
 For dinner, no doubt ;

But those on whose tables
No victuals appear—
O, may they keep Lent
All the rest of the year!

With holly and ivy
So green and so gay,
We deck up our houses
As fresh as the day,
With bays and rosemary,
And laurels complete,
And every one now
Is a king in conceit."

"Now, grocers, trade is in request,
For plums and spices of the best,
Good cheer doth with this month agree,
And dainty chaps must sweetened be.
Mirth and gladness doth abound,
And strong beer in each house is found;
Minc'd pies, roast beef, and other cheer,
And feasting doth conclude the year."

Here follows a verse from an ancient wassailing carol, which is still sung in Gloucestershire. The wassailers bring with them a great bowl, dressed up with garlands and ribbons:—

"Wassail! wassail! all over the town,
Our toast it is white, our ale it is brown;
Our bowl is made of a maplin tree,
We be good fellows all—I drink to thee.

Here's to Dobbin, and to his right ear,
God send our master a happy new year;
A happy new year as e'er he did see—
With my wassailing bowl, I drink to thee.

Here's to Smiler, and to her right eye,
God send our mistress a good Christmas pie;
As good Christmas pie as e'er I did see—
With my wassailing bowl, I drink to thee.

Here's to Fillpail, and to her long tail,
God send our master us never may fail
Of a cup of good beer; I pray you draw near,
And our jolly wassail it's then you shall hear.

Come hither, come bring us a bowl of the best,
And I'll hope your soul in heaven will rest;
But if you do bring us a bowl of the small,
Then down may fall butler and bowl and all.

Dobbin, Smiler, and Fillpail refer successively to the horse, mare, and cow.

The boar's-head and the wassail-bowl were the two most important accessories to Christmas in the olden time, and many are the allusions to the latter in our early English poets. The phrase "wassail," which is the ancient form of wishing a person "good health," occurs in the oldest carols that have been handed down to us.

New-Year's Eve and Twelfth-Night were the occasions on which the wassail-bowl were chiefly in requisition. In the royal household of Henry VII., on Twelfth-Night the steward was enjoined, when he entered with the spiced and smoking beverage, to cry, "Wassail!" three times, to which the royal chaplain had to answer with a carol or song. The following, which is the last verse of a doggerel old carol still sung in some parts of Cornwall and Devon, shows the hospitality usually experienced by singers of carols in the olden times.

"Now, kindly for my pretty song,
 Good butler, draw some beer,
 You know what duties do belong
 To them that sing so clear,
 Holly and ivy, and drink to drive you
 To the brown bowl of berry,
 With apples and all, and a Christmas tale,
 We'll make this household merry."

For the following carol, abounding in allusions to our Christmas customs and merry-makings, we are indebted to a quaint little volume of popular superstitions and folk-lore, entitled "Round About our Coal-Fire" (1734).

"CHRISTMAS IS A-COMING.

You merry, merry souls,
 Christmas is a coming;
 We shall have flowing bowls,
 Dancing, piping, drumming.

Delicate minced pies,
 To feast every virgin;
 Capon and goose, likewise,
 Brawn, and dish of sturgeon.

Then, for your Christmas-box,
 Sweet plum-cakes and money;
 Delicate Holland smocks,
 Kisses sweet as honey.

Hey for the Christmas ball,
 When we shall be jolly;
 Coupling short and tall,
 Kate, Dick, Ralph, and Molly.

Then to the hop we'll go,
 Where we'll jig and caper;
 Dancers all a row,
 Will shall pay the scraper.

Hodge shall dance with Prue,
 Keeping time with kisses;
 We'll have a jovial crew
 Of sweet smirking misses."

The custom of singing carols is very old indeed, and has been in use from the earliest history of the Church; and we are inclined

to think there is much truth in the remark of Jeremy Taylor, that the song of the angels at the birth of Christ was the origin of Christmas carols, though to some people it may seem far-fetched.

In the reign of Henry VIII., and down to the early years of the reign of Charles I., carols were general at the festive season. When the Puritans came into power, however, an Act of Parliament was passed, "That no observations shall be had of the 25th day of December, commonly called Christmas Day," and the consequence was that carols fell into disuse. At the Restoration they once more became popular, but owing to the fondness of Charles II. for worldly enjoyment, the carols that were composed and sung at this period are more the subject of mirth and felicity than religion. From this date to the present time, the popularity of these joyous songs has been on the wane. Fashions have changed, and tastes have altered; and in this age of sensational excitement, people appear to prefer novelty and flippant amusement to the innocent and delightful pastime of their ancient fathers.

The following song of Shakspeare's, although a mere scrap, breathes a delightful spirit of fancy, blended with religious feeling—

"It faded on the crowing of the cock.

Some say, that ever gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad;
The night's are wholesome, and no planets strike,
No fairy rakes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time."

Hamlet, Act I.

We may just mention here a few of the religious carols which are still popular with the waits and carol-singers of the present day. The following "Gloria in Excelsis" is sung in Roman-Catholic chapels on the Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday, and at midnight on Christmas-Eve, and then, again, at eleven o'clock on Christmas mornings.

"When Christ was born of Mary free,
In Bethlehem that fair citie,
Angels sang there with mirth and glee,

In Excelsis Gloria!

Herdsmen beheld these angels bright,
To them appearing with great light,
Who said, "God's son is born this night,"

In Excelsis Gloria!

This King is come to save mankind,
As in Scripture truths we find,
Therefore this song have we in mind,

In Excelsis Gloria!

Thou dear Lord, for Thy great race,
Grant us the bliss to see Thy face,
That we may sing to Thy solace,

In Excelsis Gloria!

The following is from an old carol, which possesses much beauty—

“Awake ! awake ! good people all !
Awake, and you shall hear,
How Christ our Lord, died on the cross,
For those He loved so dear.”

Another old carol, which we have heard within the last ten years, begins thus—

“I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day in the morning.”

There is another version of this carol, common amongst the people, which begins—

“As I sat on a sunny bank,
A sunny bank, a sunny bank,
As I sat on a sunny bank,
On Christmas Day in the morning.”

And finishes with this singular verse—Joseph and his “fair lady” being in the ships—

“Oh ! he did whistle, and she did sing,
And all the bells on earth did ring,
For joy that our Saviour He was born
On Christmas Day in the morning.”

It is the custom still in the north for a troop of singers, with or without music, to parade the streets about midnight ; and we think that every Lancashire man and woman has heard that beautiful hymn commencing—

“Christians, awake ! salute this happy morn,
Whereon the Saviour of this world was born,”

gushing forth from the untutored but still musical throats of some dozen lads and lasses, sons and daughters of the working classes.

The following are still popular and sung with great taste and skill by the working classes of Lancashire, but these are too well known and too numerous to quote. “Hark ! the herald angels sing ;” “Whilst shepherds’ watched ;” “The Angel Gabriel from God ;” “The holy well ;” “All you that are to mirth inclined ;” “God rest you, merry gentlemen !” “Come, rejoice ! all good Christians ;” “Last night as I lay sleeping,” &c. In closing our remarks upon carols, we hope they will long retain a prominent place in our Christmas festivities.

Few relics of the olden time are recurred to with more zest by our fathers than the goodly frolics and mirthful games which were wont to usher in the merry days of Christmas. We may still perceive in some parts of the country the lingering remains of the

rough sports which were wont in earlier times to enliven the comfortless period of the year in which the anniversary of the great event occurs in whose honour Christmas festivals were instituted.

Most of the games and ceremonies have quite disappeared; and while we rejoice in the departure of some, we sincerely regret the loss of others. They flourished in an age full of spirit and lustiness, when men enjoyed life roughly, but heartily and vigorously; times wild and picturesque, which have furnished poetry with its richest materials and the drama with its most attractive characters. But it is impossible in the small space allotted to this paper to enter into a minute description of the old pastimes of Christmas; but we may just say a few words with reference to the "mummers," as they are called, or the masks of ancient time.

Mumming is a sport of this festive season, which consists of a species of masquerading and in changing clothes between men and women, who, when dressed in each others habits, go from one neighbour's house to another, partaking of Christmas cheer and making merry with them in disguise. They were the never-failing attendants upon Christmas. They assumed various characters, grave as well as gay, and were the source of much innocent merriment and healthful laughter. Indecorous as it may appear, James I., who was educated a rigid Presbyterian, was so fond of these mummers, that even when the Twelfth Night fell on a Sunday, their ribaldry and buffoonery were in requisition. But it is painful to reflect that the songs and carols of these mummers have very little wisdom in them, and could only boast of a very questionable kind of wit; still their memories are deserving of respect. They are still in vogue in certain agricultural villages of England.

Amongst the amusements of our modern Christmas evenings are "Blindman's buff," "Hunt the slipper," "Snap-dragon," "Forfeits," and several others, which are most efficient ministrants to fun and frolic; last, but not least, is the old-established rite of Christmas—kissing under the mistletoe-bough. When any gentleman has a fair chance he may kiss a lady as she passes beneath the mistletoe-bough, which is generally placed in the middle of the room where the guests are assembled, or over the door by which they enter, and in some places a berry must be plucked for every kiss taken, so that when the berries are gone the privilege ceases. This custom is of course productive of many a peal of merry laughter; and we have heard of some happy matches where the first kiss of love was given and received beneath the Christmas mistletoe-bough. (This is a custom that all unmarried ladies and gentlemen would be sorry to lose.)

Shorn, however, of its ancient festive honours, and unmasked by that boisterous jollity and exuberance of animal spirit which

distinguished it in the time of our ancestors, Christmas is still a period of delightful excitement. Although society has acquired a more elegant tone, and has lost many of its old peculiarities, home-bred feelings and honest fire-side delight—although the quaint customs of golden antiquity and feudal hospitalities and lordly wassailings have passed away, with the baronial castles and stately manor houses in which they were celebrated, still the home feelings retain their powerful place in every true English bosom, that still makes their holiday the one in which of all others every class of English society most generally participate.

Christmas parties and merry-makings are still formed to render the season of dark December more cheerful and enlivening. The preparations made for spreading the social board that is again to unite friends and kindred—the presents of good cheer passing and repassing from one person to another—the evergreens, emblems of peace and gladness, hung about our houses and churches,—all these have a most pleasing effect in producing fond associations and benevolent sympathies, and announcing goodwill and fellowship to all mankind!

Yes, it is a joyous, happy time, when we should kindle not only the fire of hospitality but the flame of charity—when home affections should be revived, old animosities buried, and new ties formed which shall welcome the return of a merry Christmas and a happy New Year! And in conclusion, we may just quote a simple Christmas song, composed by an intimate friend.

“CHRISTMAS

Once more old Christmas draweth near,
With jovial beaming face;
Then yield him honour due, and pay
Allegiance to his grace.

And deck your walls with mistletoe,
And eke with holly glorious;
And be your hearts all free from care,
And all your mirth uproarious.

And hang within each hall a bough
Of mistletoe and holly;
And let the girls be kissed beneath,
From Gertrude down to Polly.

And welcome Father Christmas in,
With bursts of heartiest laughter,
Until your merry noisy din
Shall rattle round each rafter.

Until the fairies there who hide
Shall join your jocund din,
So shall you all fit homage pay,
And welcome Christmas in.

And ye who read this paper o'er
And count it nought but folly,
Think of the days when you have laughed
Beneath the Christmas holly.

When but a glance from Fanny's eyes
Was worth all worldly glories,
And earth had but one greater bliss
Then telling Christmas stories.

That bliss within the Christmas week,
Beneath the Christmas bough,
To catch some laughing girl and press
A kiss upon her brow !

A. H. MILLS.

SCARLET RECOLLECTIONS

BY SEMPER VIGILANS, B.A.

CHAPTER I.

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW FACES.

"Dear Tomba,—Parlby has been gazetted to the vacant majority in his regiment, and is off, poor fellow! by the next steamer to cultivate yellow fever at Jamaica.

"If you are still as eager for staff honours as you were when I left the Slashers, you may write A.D.C. after your name at once. You are far better off as you are, but, nevertheless, the place is your's if you choose.

"Accept this hurried scrawl instead of a more official announcement.

"Your's, &c.,

"W. Cox."

At the time this letter was placed in my hands, I was, or fancied I was, which is pretty much the same thing, the most miserable sub in Her Majesty's army.

Nearly three years had gone by since the Maggie Crab episode.* I was a lieutenant of some eight months' standing, still, of course, in the gallant 200th Royal Slashers. Our's, I have already said, was by no means a regiment for quick promotion, but three years bring about many changes. Fullarton, of course, had long been gone; Maxwell had succeeded to the baronetcy, his elder brother having obligingly taken one fence too many with the Quorn, and he was now a county magnate in Leicestershire. Ross had retired on half-pay, and an unattached majority. Dear old Captain Seaton had settled down into a Staff-officer of Pensioners; and, greatest change of all, Colonel Cox, after serving with the Slashers for nearly forty years, had been gazetted Major-General, and, subsequently, Commandant of an Infantry Brigade at Dublin. The death of the reigning sovereign is not of more importance to a country than a change of commanding officer to a regiment. It was a great shock to the 200th, and close upon its heels came another—the regiment was ordered to the Mediterranean. This decided the movements of several other officers. We had some half-dozen resignations. Dr. Crab, who had bravely remained, even after the departure of Colonel Cox and Captain Seaton, declared he could stand no more sun-strokes and mosquitoes, and exchanged on the Staff. Thus Hallett, at this moment, was lieutenant-colonel in command of the regiment, and your humble servant by no means the junior lieutenant.

I suppose that even my non-military readers are aware that it is usual for about a couple of hundred men to be left at home while the rest of the regiment is on foreign service. These stay-at-homes form the *Depôt*,—a sort of nursery, in fact, to supply any vacancies in the service abroad. Our *Depôt* was stationed, as bad luck would have it, at one of the most dreary, miserable, out-of-the-way, tumble-down holes in all Ireland,—a certain town in the West called—no, upon my word, after vilifying it in this manner, I must disguise its real title!—call it Ballybrannigan. It may have improved lately, but, at the time I speak of, it was worse than the Stepney Marshes in a fog. No society; no scenery; no river; no shooting to speak of, except a few flappers on the bogs; no hospitable country squireens, after the style of Lever's pictures of Irish Life; no communication with the outside world beyond a car twice a day from a railway station, ten bad miles off;—in fact, a very purgatory for the eight miserable officers who, with myself, were attached to the *Depôt*. “Attached,” did I say? Alas, in a military sense, yes! In every other, no,—emphatically, *no!* I had been fool enough to apply for leave to remain, and obtained it, being somehow or other a bit of a pet with the mess; and now for more than six months—it seemed six years—I had been chewing the cud of repentance, and bitterly contrasting my torpid, monotonous misery with the glowing descriptions of Corfu life and loveliness, painted by Loble, Delany, and the rest of Our's, in the letters with which they occasionally favoured us.

The fact was, as Colonel—now General—Cox had said in his letter, I had made up my mind to be his aide-de-camp, if he would have me. Upon his appointment to the staff at Dublin, he had retained the above-mentioned Captain Parbly in the post; promising, however, to remember me the moment that distinguished officer should obtain his promotion, which it was supposed would happen very shortly.

“All the same, Tombs, my boy, you're much safer with your regiment,” said the worthy veteran as we parted.

I did not learn the meaning of that oracular speech till long afterwards, and then only too late. But I must not anticipate. Therefore it was that I sought and obtained Hallett's leave to remain at the *Depôt*, as a supernumerary, on the understanding that I was shortly to be appointed to the staff.

“Better come with us, you young jackass,” observed the newly-fledged colonel, at our last mess dinner. “You'll live to repent your cocked hat before the year's out.”—another oracular speech which I certainly did not understand at the time.

And now month after month had gone by, and Ballybrannigan waxed hotter, and drier, and duller, and more—everything else

which was detestable. The barracks was a wretched, ill-built, ill-ventilated, dirty specimen of a Government take-in. The town had scarcely a decent house in it. There was no resident barrack-master. The clergyman, who acted as chaplain, had a large family of daughters, but made a point of admitting no military wolves within the fold. Even the Roman Catholic priest, who, as Lever draws him, is always ready for a hand at whist, and a steaming brew of whisky-punch, was, in this case, a saturnine, beetle-browed skeleton of a man, who looked as if he kept Lent all the year round. When we rode out, the country stretched out, flat and dreary, on every side. The landlords had vanished, through the agency of the Encumbered Estates' Court, and sundry reckless extravagancies. The tenants had been thinned by famine, emigration, and heaven only knows what beside, until a few roofless and mortarless stone walls were all the traces left of the "finest peasantry in the world." Everywhere the blighting curse of desolation was over the land, and the very pigs and children, who formed the principal population of Ballybrannigan, were a relief after the lonely silence of the high roads.

In Ballybrannigan itself things were little better. We did, after a diligent search, discover a billiard-table, the cloth patched in a dozen places, the cushions hard as lead, the room villainously foul and close. There was a fives-court in the barracks, and we made a faint attempt at a cricket club; but one can't be always knocking about balls, whether of ivory or leather. As to the mess—alas, what a change from the well-appointed table and capital fare we had been accustomed to! Our so-called "cook" could over or under do anything that ran on two legs or four, but to hit a happy medium seemed impossible. Our only resource seemed in the post, with its letters, magazines, and papers, and a knot of utterly wearied-out unfortunates were certain to be seen every evening on eager look-out for the letter-sergeant, with his precious bag. We read the *Times* and *Saunders** down to the very advertisements and share-lists. "Anything to pass away the time," as Fortescue remarked, when I found him one day gravely blowing soap-bubbles, with a long clay pipe, out of his window.

Judge then of my delight when I got my old colonel's letter! Judge whether or not I agreed with his idea that I was better off as I was! Dublin for Ballybrannigan! The Phoenix instead of a desolate bog! The Vice-Regal Lodge, and General Cox's dinner-table, in the place of the shabby mess-room of the 200th Depôt, with its perpetual bubble-and-squeak † and whiskey! The garrison

* "Saunders's News Letter,"—The *Times* of Ireland.

† "Bubble-and-Squeak," a savoury Irish dish of beef and cabbage fried together and occasionally flavoured with onions.

of Dublin instead of the eight unfortunates, who, good fellows as they were in any other place, were being converted by Ballybrannigan into disagreeable misanthropes! Whoop! Hurroo! Get along wid ye!

General Cox was not a man to do things by halves. My appointment was made out, and confirmed, and signed, and sealed, and everything else that was proper and correct, to the satisfaction of all authorities concerned, from the Horseguards downwards. My people were only too happy to hear of my good fortune, and sent—my father, a cheque to cover all possible expenses; my mother and sisters, a request to be informed of every particular connected with the Vice-Regal Court; and all of them their love and blessing. So in a few days more I found myself in Dublin.

CHAPTER II.

BALLYBRANNIGAN.

SECOND thoughts are best. I don't really think I can dismiss Ballybrannigan in this abrupt manner. Bad as the place was, and much as I hated it, there are sundry "recollections" attached to the six months I spent there which may not prove uninteresting to the reader, however unpleasant they are to myself. In fact, I rather think I shall linger over them through two or three chapters, so that if any one of my readers is unwilling to leave Dublin, whither, I confess, I have taken him in my last paragraph, he must needs turn to Chapter IV., or V., or VI.—I really cannot say which—and indulge in the young-lady-like habit of skipping all between. There is some fun even in dreariness when you are not dreary yourself, and I daresay the misery of the 200th Depôt, and the shifts that Depôt was put to, in order to kill time, would have been highly amusing to a looker-on. When I say "the Depôt," of course I mean the officers thereunto belonging.

Our chief and commandant was a certain Major Beardwood—in reality only a captain in the regiment, brought into the Slashers through an exchange from the 169th, but holding a brevet-majority for services in the East, and now promoted to the command of the Depôt companies. Prosperity spoiled him. Poor fellow, it had come late enough! He had seen twenty years service as sub. and captain, while junior after junior had purchased over his head. The colonel of the 169th had been his chum at Sandhurst, and, like a big boy in pinafore, it looked odd to see him, with his grizzled whiskers and be-medaled breast, amongst men young enough to be his sons. True, he had the rank of major in the army, but he had to trudge through the mud at the head of No. 5

company, just like Delaney, who was a captain of only a few months standing,—one of the pleasing anomalies of the service—the result of the purchase system.

Now, however, Major Beardwood was truly Major Beardwood—mounted outside a horse, orderly pacing up and down before his quarters, the whole barracks (such as it was) at his beck and bidding. I said prosperity spoiled him. He had been a quiet, inoffensive member of the mess, given to grog and whist, an occasional growl at the service, and somewhat prosy yarns; but passing muster as a very tolerable specimen of an old fogey. Now, *quanto mutatus ab illo*, he put on all the airs of a field-marshal, wore his spurs with as much dignity as a prize bantam, drilled our poor little detachment with as much vigour and perseverance as if we were just on the point of being sent to St. James's, presided at court-martials with unsparing severity, and made himself generally obnoxious to both officers and men.

Ah, those Ballybrannigan parades! I wish the civilian admirer of military spectacles in Hyde Park, or the Phoenix, could just have marched, and wheeled, and formed sections, and columns, and squares for a couple of hours under Major Beardwood's superintendence! I can see the little animal now—short, round, and generally stumpy—with his little boots nearly at right angles to his horse's flanks—"monarch of all he surveyed," and a little more. He had a perfect talent for tormenting. If it threatened rain, and the roads were several inches deep in mud already, we marched out, and came back streaming. If the thermometer stood at ninety degrees in the shade, we did a little skirmishing, the especial beauty of which consists in being kept at a sharp trot at all times when you are not squatting on one knee, taking aim at imaginary enemies from behind an imaginary shelter. If we officers suffered, pity the men, with leather stocks, Brown Bess, and cumbrous knapsack. I have seen a fine, strong, muscular fellow fall out, in a state of utter exhaustion, heartily ashamed of himself for "being a fool," as he would term it afterwards, but utterly unable to move—choked, strapped, and weighed—any longer. The major was thoroughly up to his work. I would have backed our *Depôt* companies, when I left Ballybrannigan, to have passed muster before the great "Dook" himself. The great idea at that time throughout the English army was to drill the soldier as nearly as possible into a mere mechanical, unthinking machine, and scientifically indeed did Major Beardwood practise the art.

I offer an illustration. The men were carrying their dinners one day from the kitchen. Singleton and I stood idly looking on. Just then, there passed a shock-headed, red-faced, thoroughly-drilled son of Erin, stiff and erect to a degree, carefully holding in both hands a deep pie-dish, full of savoury stew.

"Bet you five bob I make that fellow drop his dish," said Singleton.

"Bet you you don't," returned I.

"Done!" said Singleton, and took a couple of steps forward. "Hullo! you sir, there!—Halt!—AT-TEN-TION!" (bringing it out with the usual bellow).

The effect was startling. Down dropped the poor fellow's arms, like clockwork, to his sides; away went the pie-dish with a smash; and up rose a yell of uproarious laughter from every one except the victim, who cast one glance of mingled terror and bewilderment at his tormentor, and then, forgetting discipline, reverence, and all the rest of it, fairly turned tail and bolted. My sides ached for an hour afterwards, and I don't think so hearty a laugh ever went round Ballybrannigan Barracks before or since. But it was a beautiful instance of training!

Apropos of drilling, take another Ballybrannigan recollection. We had picked up a few recruits. An awkward squad of them were being put through their facings by one of our corporals—a fine specimen of Major Beardwood's tuition. The particular evolution which was being practised at the moment I stayed to watch was "right about face." It consists of three movements of the feet, performed in quick time one after the other, without a pause, the effect of which may be simply described as turning round. These three movements, however, the recruits, as in duty bound, were performing in slow time, to the music of the corporal's "One—two—three!" jerked out at intervals. They had done "One!"—they had done "Two!"—they were waiting expectantly for the concluding "Three!" when "As you was!" roared the corporal. Half the squad went back to position No. 2; the remainder to position No. 1, from whence they had started. Thereupon outspoke the corporal in the following oracular manner:—

"When I says, 'As you *was*,' I don't mean as you *were*, but as you *was afore you were*." Observe the beauty of the explanation. "*Were*" meant position No. 2; "*was*," position No. 1. It was No. 1 position they should have returned to. Q.E.D.

I have said that I was simply a supernumerary, merely attached to the *Depôt* until such time as Captain Parlbv should make room for me at Dublin. All the worse for me, as it happened. Major Beardwood seemed to think I was specially designed by Providence to fill every vacant hole and post about the barracks. If any one applied for leave of absence, oh! of course, there was Lieutenant Tombs to take his place and duty. The *Depôt*-adjutant falls ill—Lieutenant Tombs is pitched upon at once as a substitute. The acting-paymaster has a fortnight at Killarney, leaving his accounts and little payments in the hands of the same ill-used supernumerary,

who, of course, has nothing better to do with himself. Not a day's leave had Lieutenant Tombs the whole time of his sojourn at Ballybrannigan. He applied once, and was sternly refused, the major expressing his surprise that "any officer should think of absenting himself from duty on the eve of his departure from the Depôt." Pleasant this for me, who had confidently looked forward to a gentlemanly state of laziness, and freedom to do as I liked. The fact, I expect, was simply this:—Major Beardwood had had a rough knocking-about in the military world, and felt a little jealous of easy-going youngsters like myself, tolerably flush of money, able to purchase promotion, and commanding sufficient interest to secure such appointments as the one I was now waiting for. Poor old boy, he had been eight years an ensign in the 169th!

About six weeks after our arrival at Ballybrannigan, we received an addition to the mess in the shape of a newly-fledged ensign—James Augustus Napier Rydrobyn Strong—a title which nearly took up a whole gazette to itself, and reminded one of the story about a Spanish infanta, who was given such a string of names that the officiating priest had to commence the baptismal service the previous night to finish in decent time the next morning. Alas for family distinctions! our new arrival, almost from the hour he joined, was known throughout the barracks as Sprouts, a delicate allusion to a chin-tuft of faded straw colour, which he was rash enough to carry with him into the mess-room, and which, although immediately destroyed by order of the major, was of that character that once seen it never could be forgotten. Sprouts was a decent fellow enough when he kept his mouth shut. Somebody remarked about Sheffield that it would have been a remarkably jolly place if it had not existed at all; and certainly Sprouts was the jolliest when he suffered his existence to become a matter of doubt. He was remotely related to Lord Rydrobyn, Earl of Neyland, and his lordship had graciously consented to stand proxy godfather for our hero, and had even presented him with a silver mug—two facts of which he duly informed us. We tried our best to persuade him to present the mug to the mess, promising to have it placed under a glass shade; but the youth gravely declared that his mother would never consent to part with it, and that the earl would never forgive him if "it passed out of the family."

"Did your brother ever dance with the Princess Mary of Cambridge?" he inquired one day of Singleton, "mine did."

"The fellow is a born idiot," was Major Beardwood's audible comment, after the roar of laughter which greeted this remark had subsided.

But Sprouts and the major had commenced acquaintance badly. They were introduced to one another in an awkward manner. The

youth arrived at Ballybrannigan late one evening, and entered the mess-room after the major and nearly all the rest of us had retired. Singleton and Perry, however, who were having a game of *ecarté*, did the honours, procured him some supper, and bade him welcome to the Slashers in several tumblers of whiskey punch. Said punch proved so strong that he was ultimately escorted to bed, as much from necessity as politeness. In plain language, he became exceedingly drunk.

"So our new youngster arrived last night. Where is he?" said the major, next morning after parade, looking round the mess-room in anything but an amiable manner. "Not turned out, eh? That's a bad sign, gentlemen—a very bad sign. A lad who lies in bed will never make a good soldier. The service is going to the ——"

"Beg pardon, major," interrupted Captain Petrie, a very precise customer, who had a pious horror of the major's naughty words, "you are sitting on the *Times*, I think. Ah, thank you, thank you! Sorry to interrupt. You were saying?"

"I was saying, sir, that the Queen gets worse bargains every year—men and officers. I say, distinctly, both men *and* officers. Why, it was only yesterday that the doctor reported eight fellows laid up with colds, influenza colds—a complaint I thought belonged only to women and children—actually laid up, mark you!—invalided, off duty, fit for nothing! Why, when I was an ensign in the 169th there wasn't a drummer boy who would have shirked duty for less than a fever. And what do you think was the cause of these inf——"

"James! Bottle of soda-water!" shouted Captain Petrie, drowning the major's anathema.

"I ask, what do you suppose the doctor coolly tells me is the cause, sir, of eight able-bodied, full-grown privates requiring to be nursed like so many year-old babies? Why, simply the little turn-out we had on Thursday with half-an-hour's skirmishing on the common."

"A march and skirmish which ruined a new pair of Buckmaster's best regulation breeches, and gave me a twinge of rheumatism all over," observed Captain Allen.

"Stuff and nonsense!" growled the major. "If the men can't walk a yard or two in the wet, without wanting the doctor, I'll buy them each a flannel petticoat and umbrella; I will, by ——"

"Ahem, ahem!" coughed the observant Petrie.

"There's no material, sir. It grows worse every day. Scarcely a man worth his salt; and as to the officers, look at this young fellow, with more strings to his name than the commander-in-chief, sleeping for the first time in his life at Her Majesty's expense, and

yet taking it as coolly as if he were at home on his mother's feather bed! I can only repeat, emphatically, that the service is going to the ——"

"Glass of sherry with the soda water, James!" roared the captain.

The major gave an expressive grunt, and walked away.

"Pleasant look out this for Mr. James Etcetera Strong," said Singleton, when the commanding officer's upright back was turned. "I'll tell you what, Perry, it would be only civil if we took a look at him, and gave him a useful hint or two as to old Beardy's peculiarities. He'll frighten the poor lad into a fit."

Perry, who was as good-natured, jolly a sub. as any who wore scarlet, assented; and the two, after finishing their cold beef and pickles—we needed lunch at the Depôt after one of the major's drills—set off on their errand of mercy.

Now, had Ensign J. A. N. R. Strong been cast in anything like the same mould as the generality of seventeen-year-old colts, I daresay that both my messmates would have honestly prepared him for his introduction to the major, and given him a true account of the latter's peculiarities. As it was, they found the youth putting the finishing touches to his toilet. He had dressed himself in full regimentals, and was just fixing his shako over a very seedy face, admiring the effect thereof in an apology for a looking-glass, reared up against the wall on the chimney-piece. All the furniture allotted to a sub. in H. M. S. Foot, by a gracious Government, consists of one table and two chairs of the kitchen pattern, so hideous and uncomfortable, especially the chairs, that I am convinced no cook or housemaid would put up with them for a moment. Fortunately for Mr. Strong, a bed had been procured for him from somewhere or other; and one or two other necessities lent him for the night by Singleton and Perry conjointly. Nevertheless, the room presented a very forlorn appearance, with its four bare walls and uncarpeted floor, two chairs, and table; while portmanteaus and carpet-bags had vomited forth their contents in frightful confusion, there being no place to put anything and a great many things to put.

"This is but cold comfort, I am afraid," said Singleton, kindly. "You will have a servant appointed to you as soon as you have reported yourself, and he'll get your room put to rights in no time. There's a fellow in the town who lets out furniture. Perry and I will take you to him by-and-bye. First night is always a rough one in barracks."

"Oh—ah—thank you," said Strong. "I have a great deal of luggage coming. My friends took care of all that. By the way, I must really apologise for being so late. You didn't tell me what

time you took breakfast. I am afraid you must have finished some time."

"Finished breakfast!" exclaimed Perry, with a grin. "Aye, and lunch too." ("Bless the fellow!" as he afterwards observed, "I suppose he expected the major made coffee for us all, and sent round the cups"). "Why, man alive, half the day is over, and you've broken seventeen articles of war by not appearing on parade three hours ago. You'll have a court-martial sitting on you before you have fairly joined, if you don't look out."

"Oh—ah—I don't quite understand," returned our hero, with a very serious face.

"Well, you know, it's just this. You ought to have reported yourself to Major Beardwood ages ago, and he's in no end of a rage about it," went on Perry, quite forgetting all his good intentions, and regardless of Singleton's "Shut up, Perry; don't play the fool!"

"Who is Major Beardwood?" inquired Sprouts, very deliberately.

"The commanding-officer of this honourable Dépôt; our 'teacher, pastor, and master,' and all the rest of it."

"And will he set me to work at once?"

"Exactly, my dear sir. Twelve hours a day, with only half-an-hour for dinner. The last comer always tucks the men in at night, and takes away their candles."

"Do be quiet, Perry!" interposed Singleton.

"Oh, I don't mind him; it is all nonsense, I suppose," said Sprouts, loftily.

"Not altogether," replied Singleton. "It is quite true that you ought to have reported yourself to the major or adjutant; and it is also true that you will be in the hands of a drill-sergeant before you're a day older."

"And then it will be a case of awkward squad, and recruit-drill every morning at seven o'clock," put in Perry.

"Quite correct—and commencing to-morrow," said Singleton, as Sprouts turned to him for confirmation of the fact.

Sprout's face looked gloomy for an instant; then it brightened again, and he observed—

"Ah, I don't think Major Beardwood will be hard upon me after he has read my father's letter. My father is a magistrate and alderman, and he gave me a note for my commander, asking him not to set me too much to do at first. Indeed, I thought every one had a holiday for a week or two at starting."

"Now, Tombs, I put it to you," said Singleton to me afterwards, when scolded for the trick which he and Perry played the confiding youth at the end of this conversation. "I put it to you;—

could anyone resist hoaxing such a ninny-hammer? It was the cool impudence of the fellow which tempted us."

I confess, indeed, it was a strong temptation. My two brother subs. fell victims to it.

"Well, Strong, you must go at once to the orderly-room, or I won't answer for the consequences," said Singleton, when he had done laughing. "Bring your letter with you if you like, but come along. We'll go with you."

"What am I to do when I get there?" asked Sprouts, who was waxing a little nervous. "Have I to go through any ceremony, or will the major just shake hands with me? You see I have never been taught anything about the matter, but I suppose it will be all right."

"All right!" My good fellow, do you mean to say you have never learnt the proper way of reporting yourself to the field-officer in command?" exclaimed Perry, in a tone of horror. "Good gracious, Singleton! just fancy such a thing!"

Singleton put on a very serious face and shrugged his shoulders. Sprouts, who was inclined to believe in him, looked bewildered.

"Can't you show me what to do?" he asked at length.

"Of course we can," said Perry, as if suddenly inspired with a great idea. "You are in full uniform. That's all right. Well, now, you'll have to go across to the orderly-room, walk through the door, take three paces towards the major, draw your sword, and present arms to him."

Singleton started, but a severe glance from Perry checked him, and he remained silent. Sprouts looked more bewildered than ever.

"But——" he began.

"But you don't know how to present arms. Well, draw your sword, and we'll teach you."

Dear reader, this shall really and truly be my last *shop* anecdote. Let me follow the example of Messrs. Singleton and Perry, and teach you how an officer presents arms. It is his salute to the general, or commanding-officer upon parade, when the whole battalion presents arms, or when marching past in slow time. Without going into technicalities, it may be described as follows. The sword is first raised until the hilt is about level with the face; then it is lowered until the blade points obliquely to the ground, while the left hand is raised in salute to the shako; finally, it is raised again, and held in a slanting direction across the body, with the blade slightly grasped between the thumb and fingers of the left hand. This is a rough description, but sufficient to give some idea of the salute,—one, I need hardly say, which was simply ridiculous in the case of poor Sprouts, and his presentation to the major.

However, the two imps of mischief fell to work, and gave their victim a good twenty minutes practice in presenting arms ; Singleton taking the part of the major, and Perry putting Sprouts through his paces ; in the course of which he chipped both walls and ceiling, and gave several cuts at what little furniture there was to cut at. Finally, he was pronounced to be perfect,* and his two tormentors escorted him gravely downstairs and across the barrack-yard to the orderly-room.

"You will come in with me, won't you?" said Sprouts, who was becoming quite meek and lamb-like, as he neared the scene of action.

"Certainly not," responded Perry, looking as solemn as an owl. "Not permitted. You must enter alone. But don't be nervous ; you've only got to do what we've taught you. And, I say, go through it as smartly as you can—the major is very particular. Now then, in you go !" and poor Sprouts was half pushed through the orderly-room door, and left to his fate.

It so happened that on this very morning I was taking the adjutant's duty, and writing away for bare life at a lot of returns which had to be sent up to Dublin by the evening mail. It was not the first time that this pleasing and lucrative business had been handed over to me, for, as I have already stated, I was a sort of supernumerary, at anybody's disposal who wanted to be idle,—at least, so thought Major Beardwood. I had been hard at work for several hours,—scribble, scribble, scribble—like a clerk in a lawyer's office ; while the major sat opposite, with a twin batch of documents before him, and interrupted me every now and again with some instruction or order, until I was fidgeted beyond all endurance. It was a frightful hole was that orderly-room, close, dirty, and furnished only with a big table and some common deal chairs, besides a huge bullock-trunk or two, and a perfect ocean of papers. Just as I was getting desperate with heat, worry, ink, hunger, weariness, and above all, the major, in walked a dapper little non-commissioned officer, with an unhappy prisoner in tow,—a great raw-boned private of a few months' standing, who had staggered into barracks the night before so hopelessly drunk that, as the sergeant remarked, he had "only just come to himself," and a very sorry self it was to come to. There he stood—jacket torn, trousers coated with dry mud, face scratched, and look intensely sheepish ; while the sergeant entered into full details, and the major scowled in a way that threatened all sorts of things. It was a blessed excuse for idleness, so I put down my pen and watched proceedings.

At this moment Ensign J. A. N. R. Strong made his appearance. The reader knows him already a great deal better than I

did then; in fact, I had not as yet seen him—no more had the major, no more had the big prisoner, or little sergeant; but the latter recognised the epaulets of an officer, ceased speaking immediately, and drew back from the table, while the major looked up, and I half rose to greet our new mess-mate. I have often thought since that a special fate aided the joke, for, assuredly, had the major at once held out his hand with some customary common-place as “Mr. Strong, I suppose?” “Glad to welcome you to the Slashers,” “Save you the trouble of introducing yourself,” or something of the sort, the poor fellow would have had no opportunity or excuse for making a fool of himself. As it was, the *tableau* which met his gaze was sufficiently solemn; the major looking like a thunder-cloud, your humble servant bored and sulky, the sergeant reverential, and the big prisoner in the depths of misery. At any rate, nothing could have better served the purpose of the two wags outside.

There was no room for “three paces to the front,” but the unhappy youth took two, which brought him slap up against the table. With a mighty effort he unsheathed his sword, made what appeared to be a fierce poke at the ceiling, inflicting thereby a wound, and bringing down several fragments of plaster, and then whirled the weapon round—there is no other word for it—with a cut so directly aimed at the major’s person, that, had he not hastily started back, he would have tested the sharpness of the blade in a somewhat unpleasant manner. Mr. Strong was presenting arms after his own fashion, but, upon my word, it had a very murderous look. The major made a leap backwards, fell over his chair, and staggered heavily against the big prisoner, who reeled in his turn against the wall, as naturally as he had reeled into barracks the night before. The sergeant forgot all reverence, and shouted, “Mind out, sir! what are you about?”—and we both made a rush at the sword and captured it. In the confusion the ink-bottle was upset, and, woe is me!—a black flood poured over the precious documents I had been slaving over all the morning. I cannot be certain, but I fancy I heard a smothered burst of laughter outside. It was anything but a laughing matter within. Everyone was stunned for a moment. Major, sergeant, big prisoner, and myself—we all stood staring at one another in mute astonishment. For once in his life, Major Beardwood was fairly non-plussed. His look of amazement would have been worth a fortune to him on the stage. If anything was wanting to complete the farce, we had it.

“Oh, please, sir,” said a voice, “I’m so sorry! I meant to present arms to you.”

The major gave a gasp—a little shake, like a man suddenly roused out of a heavy slumber—took up his shako, cast a look at

the ink-stained papers, and walked towards the door. His silence was eloquence itself, at least, I felt it so. When he got to the door he stopped, turned half round, and simply remarked—

“Just write up to Dublin for a straight-jacket, Mr. Tombs.”

Then he vanished. And this was his first interview with Ensign Strong.

GRAY: STOKE POGEIS, AND "THE ELEGY"

It is a bad plan, if you have been powerfully impressed by a scene or an event, and wish to preserve your impressions in their original vividness, not to make a record of them at once. Impressions are terribly evanescent things; you fancy, while subjected to their powerful influence, that nothing can be easier than to recall them at will; but in after-years, when you try to do so, you find that it requires a greater effort than your memory is capable of. Even in a few days much of the vigour, much of the raciness of an impression disappears; much of its lustre is rubbed off. I am led into these thoughts as I try to live over again the feelings I experienced during a visit I made to Stoke Pogeis, a short time ago. I confess, it is no easy matter to recall them in a state sufficiently satisfactory to myself, although they were remarkably strong and deep at the time. I am an intense admirer of the poet Gray, and hold his famous "Elegy" in great veneration; and therefore, when I found myself on the very spot he has immortalised, I was naturally a good deal impressed. All kinds of thoughts passed through my mind; and if I were a person who kept a diary, most probably I should have had it out, and everyone of these thoughts would have been dotted down there and then; so that for some reasons I regret that I am not one of those who are in the habit of systematically recording their feelings. Depend upon it it's the only way if you want to preserve them from corruption and decay; embalm them at once in ink and paper. Gray himself in one of his letters has some admirable observations on the wisdom of a man's immediately embodying in writing the notions and feelings raised in his mind by a place or event, if he would wish to recall them to himself or make them known to anyone else at a future period. Let me quote what he says. "I almost envy your last month, being in a very insipid situation myself; and desire you would not fail to send me some furniture for my Gothic apartment, which is very cold at present. It will be the easier task as you have nothing to do but transcribe your little red bookes, if they are not rubbed out; for I conclude you have not trusted everything to memory, which is ten times worse than a lead pencil. Half a word fixed upon or near the spot is worth a cart-load of recollection. When we trust to the picture which objects draw of themselves on our mind, we deceive ourselves; without accurate and particular observation, it is but ill drawn at first; the outlines are soon blurred; the colours every day grow fainter, and at last, when we would produce it to anybody, we are forced to supply its defects with a few strokes of our own imagination."

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon of a January day when I came to the lodge-gate through which you have to pass to get to Stoke Church. The day was drooping and cheerless ; wrapped in a melancholy mist of thin texture and dirty blue-grey colour. I was quite alone ; at the same time, in describing this visit, I wish it to be understood that an imaginary friend accompanies me throughout ; that he assents to everything I say or propose in the most delightful humour of compliance ; that he perfectly understands my speech and gestures ; and that though he never speaks a word himself, he yields me his unbounded sympathy and attention. Come, then, my fleshless, boneless brother of shadows, link your spirit arm within mine, and let us open this gate and take our way along the gravel path by the side of the laurels and rhododendrons ; beware, brother, of lagging, lest I poke your unseen ribs with my umbrella. Here, you see, our path takes a turn to the left ; ah, and there, some fifty yards ahead of us, of true English air and feature, stands the dear old church and churchyard of pleasant memory. This first sight of the two, apart from any feeling of association, prepossesses me greatly in their favour. How genuinely English their look ! I like their simple, unpretending expression. At this first glance, they have taken such a hold on my affections as is not likely soon to be relinquished ; I and they must certainly become better acquainted. It is not my intention to discuss the antiquity of this church. I shall not trouble the reader with a statement of how long ago it was built, who built it, or who happened to be king of England at the time its foundation-stone was laid. In the first place, I am ignorant of each and all of these facts ; and secondly, I have not sufficient curiosity to make the requisite inquiries about them. It is not to say, however, that because I have no taste for such things myself I entertain the less reverence and respect for those who have. From my heart, I admire the archæologist as I see him, broom in hand, patiently sweeping the dust of centuries from some ancient piece of statuary ; brushing the cobwebs and mildew from some moth-eaten volume ; spending months in scraping from a stone the dirt with which age has encrusted it, and in attempting to bring to light the inscription which an unerring antiquarian instinct tells him lies buried beneath ; groping, rummaging in the lumber-rooms of Time, turning all therein topsyturvy, and mercilessly ransacking whatever comes in his way, from an old abbey to a piece of mouldy parchment. Such a spectacle cannot but impose on the minds of all sensible and enlightened beholders, and I pity the man who is not impressed by it. Dr. Dryasdust, my very good friend, permit me to shake you by the hand. That hand has just been grubbing among rubbish and debris ; but what of that ? Has it not even now raked thence the wisdom-tooth of an unquestionably primeval British wolf ? Come,

sir, I will take no denial; unwashed though your hand be, its pressure does me honour. I am amazed and astounded at your tastes and predilections, and at the indefatigable industry and indomitable perseverance put forth to ensure their gratification. But I must admire and adore at a distance; I am neither worthy nor capable of being enrolled in your fraternity; nature has denied me a passion for decayed bones and musty vellum. Therefore, Dr. Dryasdust, I leave, with the utmost confidence, the history of Stoke Church in your hands. One moment, though: I bethink me now there is a fact connected with that history which I believe has charm and attraction for many people—one epoch of much general interest; having to do, however, with the associative—if I may be allowed the expression—history of the church, rather than with the history of its stones and mortar. The epoch I refer to is the year 1749. One evening of that year there sat in that graveyard we see before us a man of a grave and thoughtful cast of countenance, hard cut and strongly marked in feature, and in expression somewhat severe; who, as the shadows of twilight fell on the scene, composed that poem with which we are all so well acquainted,* and which the most of us probably have got by heart; a poem which has been the pride and delight of English homes for many a day, and has become a household word in our language; a poem, I may also add, which school-boys and school-girls very often detest with a hearty goodwill after having made its acquaintance through the medium of those abominations called "readings" and "selections." Yes, prettiest and most picturesque of churches, venerable in thy garments of ivy, those kindly creepers that have sprung up to cover thy desolation, and, with their tender arms clasping thee, to protect and support thee against the wasting power of age, to beautify thee in this, the winter and decline of thy days, on that evening wast thou done true honour to; and true honour also was done to that graveyard of thine which from here we behold girding thee about with its multitude of mouldering heaps and carved slabs, and its wide-spreading yews and elms, that stand with out-stretched arms to guard thy quiet and to shield thee from the rude breath of storms. From that time you two could lay claim to a distinction well deserved; for long years left comparatively unknown and unnoticed in your sequestration, then suddenly brought forth before the eyes of men, and crowned with honour and immortality. And I repeat, a distinction well deserved; for never, in your kind, have I seen such a pleasing picture of beauty joined hand-in-hand with simplicity and attempered to humility.

* Of course there is, as far as I am aware, no actual evidence to prove that Gray wrote his "Elegy" sitting in the churchyard in the twilight, but it is pleasant to fancy so; and whether such was the case or not is really a matter of little consequence.

Now, my imaginary friend, let us on and get a closer look at things. As one passes through the turnstile into the church-yard, one almost feels as if treading on holy ground. Is it because the mind, do what it will, cannot separate the associations which link themselves to a thing from the thing itself that this spot of ground appears so peculiarly charming and attractive? Possibly so. It is a difficult matter to regard anything in this world merely for its own sake, to look at a thing in its naked intrinsicness, shorn of all adventitious lustre. Truly association is life and soul to most things that be; the vital spark, the divine afflatus of them—their health, the marrow of their bones. 'It sets a halo on the brow of ugliness, makes dullness and common-place attractive, and gives a power and an influence to what is otherwise weak and contemptible. Nothing more surely causes the desert to rejoice and the wilderness to blossom as the rose. Still, looked at only in its bare self, I ask you, my friend, did your eye ever light upon a greener, snugger, compacter, or more, in the whole character of it, rural habitation of mortality than this, or one more suggestive in its aspect of sober cheerfulness and complete repose, of thoughts of hope and peace, and of the certainty of a joyful resurrection to that other life which lies beyond the grave? Look at yonder screen of elms by the wall; what steadfast, untiring watchfulness in their posture! watchfulness that never slumbers! What kindly protection in the outspreading of their boughs!—these on the dust beneath them, those over the wall and beyond it! And it seems to me that there is much meaning and expression in this double attitude of the branches. "Slumber on, ye buried ones, in peace," the first seem to say; "fear not but that I shall continue to shelter you, and hang vigilant over you till the sound of the trumpet bids you awake, and calls you to a new life and a new world." The second: "Disturb not, passer-by, with thoughtless levity this hallowed spot; tread softly as you go beneath this wall; you, too, will soon have to come within and be laid under my shade." Note, also, this clump of yews hard by the church door. Tenderly do they look down on the grass-grown mounds and rudely-carved stones at their feet—a tenderness to the eye of fancy quite parental. Noble old patriarchs, ye are worthy of the care of the dead! I have an idea that were my departed ones consigned to your trust I should have a more comfortable and a more resigned feeling in respect to them. Surely your arms are spread in benediction, as well as in protection! May no profane axe ever be laid to your roots—that were rank sacrilege indeed! At the foot of these yews are four grave-stones, all plain and rough as when brought from their native quarry, but covered in part with lichen and fungi, in shape resem-

bling those flat milestones that mark the distances on high roads. They are, every one of them, crooked; this leans back on the trunk of one of the yews, that bends over to its companion on the right, and this again to its neighbour on the left. Such stones are my delight. Place such an one over me, my friends, when I am gone. Away with your huge, hollow-sounding family vaults, your costly piles of masonry towering over the unknowing and unappreciating dust, your whitened marble sepulchres; with their neatly-carved epitaphs of lies, their allegorical figures, and their filagree iron railings! *Vanitas vanitatum*. Not if I were never such a Dives! Give me thy unadorned turf or ragged stone, Lazarus; the one with its daisies and violets watered with the tears of sincerity, or the other with its scarce legible inscription of name, and year of birth and death. Many stones of the kind do I see crowding around, and the sight is a most pleasant one. Once more, my friend, cast your eye over these graves, and tell me, don't you sympathise in the feeling I have, that in this churchyard I would gladly be laid when pale Death has touched me on the shoulder and beckoned me to Hades? for that here peculiarly everything seems to whisper that that last sleep could be no other than one of most perfect peace, and that the weary would assuredly be at rest? I wonder if Gray ever felt this during the time he lived at Stoke. He must have had a special love for the little graveyard, one would think, for his mother lies buried within it; everybody knows how tenderly devoted he was to her. Here, too, the poet's own dust sleeps; before all, most fitting abode for him, the spot which, living, he immortalised, and which, though he be now dead, his bones sanctify and bless. As for his spirit, who, with the smallest particle of imagination or enthusiasm, but must be conscious, standing on this ground, that it permeates and vivifies all things around; it is, and ever must be, the *genius loci*. Were it indeed permitted to the dead to "burst their ceremonies," after the manner of Hamlet's father, and to "revisit the glimpses of the moon," I could fancy the poet's shade many a night stealing along under those elms in the moonlight, flitting from tombstone to tombstone among the green graves, and, as it gazed on the old church and looked abroad on the lea, recalling the days of more than a hundred years ago, when, in the body, it moralised and sung of these things. And I could fancy it, too, lingering lovingly among the scenes of its inspiration; and then, as the glow-worm "'gan to pale its ineffectual fire," and the shadows of night to depart, hastening back to its quiet resting-place beneath the earth. But to many this may be to "inquire too curiously."

The church-door, I see, stands open; let us take a peep inside. The place is not wholly empty. There is a woman busy with her broom, sweeping the week's accumulated dust and cobwebs from

pew and aisle. She looks the personification of house-wifely energy as she puts everything straight in preparation for the morrow, which is Sunday. "Like to see through the church, sir?" she asks, resting on her broom and dropping a curtesy. "Yes, I should," I reply, as I jump alertly aside to make way for a procession of dust motes floating towards me, evidently with the intention of effecting a passage through the doorway, "I don't expect, however, there's very much to see; the chief interest of this place lies outside." "Yes, sir; I fear you'll find but little inside to look at; it's much the same as other churches."

And true enough it is, as we are feign to acknowledge in looking around us. The place has nothing specially attractive in itself; and there is little, as far as I can see, with which to associate it, and so redeem it from its dreary flatness and common-place. The interior of this church presents a striking and, to me, painful contrast to what we have been looking at outside. Outside we have contemplated old walls worn by time, and muffled in ivy; walls in a green and lusty old age, redolent of antiquity; we come within, and find pillars of solid stone, drawn up in regular order, without vestige of feebleness or decay; every one of them of a cold, hard, impassive demeanour; the walls, too, whitewashed into a perfect evenness, and looking as new and formal as if built yesterday. The contrast is not pleasing, yet it would be more than absurd were we to allow a fanciful enthusiasm for the romantic and picturesque so to carry us away as to make us ignore the fact that, in this matter, comfort and convenience have a paramount claim to a voice. Our ideal conception of a country church may be that it is furnished with pillars and pews rough-hewn, and beautiful in their irregularity and simple rusticity, and that its roof is supported by rafters of like make and mould. Well, of course, we have a perfect right to nourish any ideal we like on the matter; only it may be as well to remember that these rustic pillars of ours, picturesque as we may fancy them, very soon become tenements of decay, breeding worms, and gradually consume away in rottenness; that rough unvarnished rafters make fine receptacles for dust and spiders'-webs, and are the familiar haunts of earwigs and slaters; and that it is no uncommon thing for the coats and dresses of the congregation to get bespattered with the dust and cobwebs, nor for the earwigs and slaters to crawl up the congregation's legs and arms, much to the congregation's general discomfort, and the utter distraction and confusion of its devotional feeling. Therefore, all things considered, our darling romantic element may with profit be sacrificed sometimes for solider advantages. At the same time, the fact remains undeniable that the strong power at present holding our minds being the power of association, we can find little that is

suggestive here except chilliness ; and that only suggests to me the advisability of getting outside again as quickly as possible. The moment we leave the yews and the elms, and the graves and the gravestones, and the lea that lies hard by, the golden thread of association is swept asunder. Hitherto we have been accompanied, so to speak, by the spirit of the poet, over the ground he has made his own. The moment, however, that we enter the church-door, we lose that gentle guide ; his presence is withdrawn from us ; we are no longer in his peculiar domain. It was not his province to sing of pew, or chancel, or pulpit, or even of organ, deeply solemn and thrilling as that instrument may blow ; nor yet to moralise on the ritual or the sermon of Ecclesiastes. For my part, I think it would be as well, my friend, to act upon that suggestion of chilliness, and return to the churchyard. Those festoons of holly and mistletoe twining around the pulpit, and clambering up the pillars, are doubtless pretty and effective ; and that "Glory to God in the Highest !" wrought of leafy letters, is unquestionably in good taste ; but this is not what we came for, being quite aware that decorations of the kind are to be met with in almost every church in the kingdom at this time of year, and differing little as to their comparative tastefulness or prettiness. Of course, there is no demur on the part of my friend to what I propose ; and we are once more in the churchyard. Since those few minutes' absence, the aspect of things has undergone a considerable change. Evening has begun to gather up her mantle, and to cast some folds of it over the scene ; very slowly and quietly does she do so, but nevertheless very certainly. Every moment objects grow dimmer, though truly, during the whole day they have never been very clear. I mentioned at the outset what kind of a day it was. I should be sorry to point a foreigner to it as a legitimate specimen of a whole English winter. How well we all know what we delight to call a thorough winter day !—a bright, cheery creature, with a mellow ring in its voice ; a brow of clear blue ; a crisp, frosty breath, and a spirit that begets hilarity and elation of soul. This day is made up of no one definite element ; all is incongruity : an apparent compound of frost and muggy humidity. The face of every object is covered with a sullen gloominess more painful to look upon than when objects are hidden altogether behind an impenetrable fog. The heavens above and the earth beneath seem bowed with depression ; a sudden numbness and paralysis appears to have come upon everything ; languor and sluggishness have taken hold upon all atmospheric springs of action. Is it that Nature has sustained some irreparable loss, and gone into mourning ?—or is it that she has been put out by something of which we know nothing, and got an outrageous fit of the sulks ? Oh ! what a variable and capricious climate is ours !—full of

humours, and fancies, and crotchets innumerable. Canst thou wonder, Britannia, that suicide is so common a thing beneath thy skies? Enough, however, of a theme so hackneyed, and so provocative of choler at the least mention of it. Defend me from being either an habitual meteorological grumbler or an habitual meteorological gossip: two greater bores cannot be imagined. And so we pass out of the churchyard, and retrace our steps along the path we came up; but, instead of bending our course down the walk which leads to the lodge, we proceed for a few yards straight on to Grey's monument, which stands at the end of the way. A modest, unassuming piece of masonry enough, this monument; a plain, square block of stone of good size, without ornament or embellishment of any kind. It has the history and end of its existence inscribed on it. It was erected by certain admirers of the poet in memory of him, and as a tribute to his genius. In its perfect simplicity and freedom from artistic garniture, I think it a becoming and appropriate tribute, and quite in harmony with the character of surrounding objects, and with the subdued tone of that composition it in so large a measure commemorates. It might have taken the form of a full-length statue of the poet, raised aloft on a pedestal six or seven feet high, with perchance a scroll of some sort dangling from his hand—the class of thing into which memorials to great men too often shape themselves nowadays. But, luckily, the good taste of those who projected this tribute has saved me, and all others who take an interest in the matter, such pain. How totally out of place a work of the kind would have been!—an eyesore in the landscape, a blot on the face of this pleasant lea. Under the arches of the grand old abbey, in company with others of a like kind—there, I grant you, a statue, embodying the poet's figure, would be appropriate enough. If I could etch, I would make a drawing of the stone before me, and have it transcribed to this paper; not that it is much of a subject on which to display artistic skill, but a sketch of it might help to give you a better idea about it than I can do in words. It is enclosed within an iron railing, from which the turf slopes up to the path above, so forming a kind of ditch all round. In addition to the monument itself, there are within the railing one or two plots planted with laurel and rhododendron; and outside again, on one side, a whole hedge of shrubbery, extending along the walk to the lodge. On each of the four sides of the monument there is graven an inscription. This, on the side looking towards the shrubs, records the dates of the poet's birth and death, and informs you that his bones, and also those of his mother and sister, lie buried in the neighbouring churchyard; also, further, when and by whom the monument was erected. This, on the side facing the church, contains that verse from "The

Elegy," "One morn I miss'd him on the accustomed hill," &c.; the other two inscriptions likewise contain verses from the poet's works. Let us seat ourselves for a little, my friend, on this green turf, and read "The Elegy" over—or, rather, repeat it; for I'm afraid there is not light enough to do the former. This is the very hour we should be here; already twilight, sombre-clad, has come down, and will very soon merge into darkness; we may imagine all things to be in much the same posture as when Gray wrote his poem. There, some hundred and fifty yards in front of us, stands the same old church in the midst of its same peaceful graveyard; both probably unaltered, save that since the poet's time mortality has added some fresh mounds to the one, and closer folds of ivy have crept up over the walls of the other. There, too, flourish the same venerable old yews and elms, casting their sweet shade over the graves around them. Long may ye continue so to flourish, and spread abroad your branches, ye benign sons of the forest! Partly behind, and partly to the right of the church, we can discern the hamlet, for the most part hidden by trees, yet peeping here and there through the branches, like coy maiden behind her wimple, who, while concealing the fulness of her charms, gives you occasional glimpses of them to show you they are there. Beauty, in whatever form it is found, always looks best when its features are but barely revealed, and its presence only disclosed by hints. Stretching around us is the lea, its rich grass all shrunken and swallowed by the touch of winter; but there is this comfort in regard to it, that before many months have passed it will have repaired its decayed beauty, have roused its slumbering energies, and have raised its head to bloom with a greener and fresher verdure, warmed, nourished, and exhilarated by the fostering influence of spring. It is comforting, too, and pleasant to reflect that those trees, now so naked and cheerless, will then be bursting into leaf, and that, soon after, the winds of heaven will be playing in their matured foliage; and also that the little warblers now cuddling together on the boughs, all chill, and forlorn, and voiceless, will then begin gaily to bestir themselves, and to prune and oil their plumage, to make the woods vocal with song. By yonder gate at the end of the lea, adjoining the hamlet, the outlines of five cows are faintly discernible in the twilight. They have all got their heads poked out over the gate, and are looking expectantly down the road, longing, probably, for the appearance of some familiar form, which will be a sign to them that milking-time has arrived—a period which, it is commonly supposed, is looked forward to with peculiar relish by the vaccine tribe. One of them lifts her head at intervals, and lows deeply, in tones evidently of entreaty; and forthwith her four sisters of the pail do also lift their heads and join in chorus. Patience, my

beauties! yonder comes Giles, sauntering down the lane to open the gate, and drive you to your snug, warm cow-shed, where, in a little time, you will be luxuriously reposing among the clean straw, and lazily chewing the cud. Come, Giles, leave notching that stick, my boy, and quicken your steps a little,—have some thought for your bovine care, you who sup with such relish off the sweet, warm milk they yield!

In going over "The Elegy," I propose to make a kind of running commentary on it. It will be cold work, perhaps; but this thick overcoat and the warmth of my enthusiasm will, together, keep *my* blood in circulation; and as for you, my shadowy friend—you, with your incorporeal essence, your ethereal identity, are impervious to both heat and cold.

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day;
The lowing herds wind slowly o'er the lea;
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me."

What specially strikes one in this verse is the quantity and variety of matter concentrated in it. Within the compass of these four lines there is a complete picture, every detail of which is fully developed: a landscape—figures moving on it—sounds giving it a voice—and the hour of day that binds it in its influences. Nay, this picture is exhibited to us under two distinct aspects—under two separate conditions of being. The first scene, in some degree alive with sound and the movements of men and brutes, passes, panorama like, away, and gives place to the same scene, but changed altogether as regards most of its previous characteristics; sound hushed into silence; movement, both bestial and human, permanently arrested; darkness come suddenly down, deep-brooding, with sable wings, over the face of everything, and all objects having life and breath swept clean away, save yonder solitary figure wrapped in the dense gloom, and scarcely to be distinguished through it. This is a very perfect picture. The poet is possessed of a true, well-judging eye; his power of vision is comprehensive, and at the same time discriminative. He looks at things thoroughly and correctly, piercing with his glance right into the heart of them; perceiving the principles and mainsprings of their being, but blind to mere trivialities and meagre details. And so, at one dash of his brush, so to speak, he produces a perfect sketch, throwing into his subject all that is really beautiful and effective, while flinging tame minutiae to the winds. His choice of the heroic measure with alternate rhymes is most happy. Rhyming couplets with his subject would never have done—much too precise and formal and concentrated for it. The spirit of the matter would have gone high being swamped in the unceasing ring of the rhyme.

Leave rhyming decasyllabic couplets to Pope, they are just suited for his purposes; they seem made for him, and he for them. Considering how entirely they obey his behests, he works wonders with them. At one time he will take and smooth them, and give them a sharp, fine edge, and having so done, will enter Belinda's dressing-room, and cause them to take note of all her boxes and patches, and to set these out before you in the most exquisite order; at another time he will, by means of the same agents, reason in strong epigram, and with much brilliance of antithesis, on the estate of man; or, again, tipping them with a keen venom of satire, he will hurl them tremendous at Atticus and Colley Cibber, and transfix these poor victims to the earth. But for the treatment of this homely buckram-suited Stoke Church no such glitter of verse was required; it was a subject entirely out of the province of Mr. Pope's school. In place, then, of Pope's rapid-pacing, nicely modulated chimes, we have a slow, deliberative, pausing measure, that marches on in stately dignity, and moves in rhyme only at the end of every second line. The poet has a singularly happy faculty of wedding his words to his sense; the words seem constantly an echo of the matter; I might almost say, a special property of it, matter and words being so much parts of one another, that you cannot separate the two without destroying both. The language of all Gray's poems, indeed, is the most felicitous conceivable. Over words he seems to wave a magician's wand, and in this respect may almost be ranked with Shakspeare, who, besides the other lofty attributes which characterise his genius, towers pre-eminent among English word-painters. How distinctly, with its solemn muffled tone, is the curfew tolled out in that first line!* Every vibration of it booms and lingers on the ear. And with what a visible hand does that last line let down the curtain of the dark over all things! But not only has the poet grasped the scene in its character of a physical fact; he has also caught and reproduced the *humour*, so to speak, of it; in other words, that spiritual essence which pervades and vitalises every object and phenomenon in this world, and which is none other than an emanation of the Divine intellect, itself appealing to certain instincts and aspirations implanted in the higher part of our own nature, all of which are fashioned after that emanation's own similitude. Just as these instincts and aspirations vary in degree

* I am open to be reminded by the critic that Gray probably borrowed the first line of his "Elegy" from Dante, and that, in fact, the whole piece is borrowed from an early Italian poem; but whether such is the case or not, I maintain that "The Elegy," by reason of its thoughts, its diction, and general construction, which are so thoroughly Anglicanised, has a legitimate claim to be considered and accepted as a new and original poem.

of intensity in different breasts, so does the response to the appeal vary in clearness and richness of articulation. In the majority of cases it has no audible articulation whatever; it is soundless, unembodied, and remains unknown to all but the person from whom it comes; it is a response rising up in the heart, but finding no utterance, capable only of being silently breathed. But wherever we find that this response can command expression, and that its power of utterance corresponds in fulness and intensity to the appeal, we may be sure that the instincts and aspirations of which it is the fruit are of the highest kind, and in the most perfect state of development. Then is the purest, most genuine of poetry generated alike be it shaped in verse or prose; and he or she out of whose bosom issues such divine harmony may justly be called a true poet. No two people, I suppose, have ever agreed upon what constitutes an exact definition of the term poetry, and, probably, no two people ever will; and certainly, I am not going to put forward any elaborate theory on the subject; for, in doing so, one only plunges into a metaphysical swamp, the opposite bank of which it is impossible to reach; and, indeed, you may consider yourself lucky if you can manage to scramble on to *terra firma* again at all; so that the few hints I have dropped above as to my idea of poetry must suffice for the present. Certainly, I think Gray comes under the category of real poets; though opinions will differ as to the order in which he should be classed. Let us pass on to the next verse.

"Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds;
Save where the beetle winds his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds."

The poet's eye follows the shiftings and transitions of things; and with the same happy adaptation of words to sense does he describe them. Dimmer, dimmer, swims the landscape before him, fading into, and at length wholly swallowed by, the darkness, and in the air "solemn stillness"—mark that word *solemn*; it is the secret subtle vitality of that second line—but for that, ever and anon—hum, hum—the beetle's march-note as he journeys through the air; and in the distance that tinkle, tinkle of folded sheep,—sounds, you would say, scarcely interruptive of the "solemn stillness," so harmoniously do they seem to blend with it. What luxury of repose in those "drowsy tinklings!" I can hear their lullaby as I sit here; and with that line of Gray's too, in my ear—a veritable echo of them—I believe I could soon fall asleep, even in this chill atmosphere.

When a mind of true poetic mould is attracted towards some particular aspect of nature, however simple, it is generally in-

fluenced in two ways. First of all, it is inspired to draw an outline of the scene before it, to produce a sketch of the physical conditions of objects brought under its notice ; and in the second place, it is moved to interweave with the sketch so produced some idea or reflection evolved from its own internal consciousness, to fill up the meagre outline—which, though it may be excellent, and, indeed, perfect of its kind, is yet but as a body without spirit—with colours drawn from the deep recesses of its own being, which will strike the observer as exactly harmonising with the tone of that aspect of nature of which a copy is made. Such a mind, in fact, extracts what of intellectuality is contained in the natural objects with which it is brought in contact ; for it is a certain truth that Nature, even in the humblest and most insignificant of her developments, teems and brims with intellectuality, though many people, doubtless, see in a primrose "a simple primrose and nothing more." Between the soul of the poet and the soul of nature, a regular process of action and reaction is carried on. It is the presence or absence of this spiritual action which constitutes the difference between a true priest of the muses and a mere shallow pretender, who, although he may have appropriated to himself every sacerdotal badge and trapping within his reach, is yet without the anointing of the sacred oil which can alone dedicate him to his office. With regard to the particular idea or reflection generated in the poetic mind, I would observe that it must always be of a sympathetic and coincidental character ; it must contribute to, and unite with, the measure of intellectuality extracted from the objects on which the bodily eye rests, so that in the absence of this spiritual creation that measure of intellectuality will be incomplete and imperfect ; it will be but a relative half, requiring to be joined to something akin to its own nature before it can be regarded as a positive whole ; to speak in metaphysical language, the mental phenomenon must form the *subjective* to the *objective* of the natural phenomenon.

In the poem we are considering, Gray's reflections are eminently sympathetic and coincidental ; both in their conception and in their language they blend most harmoniously with the sober yet suggestive character of the objects presented to the poet's eye. On the one hand, there is the hamlet, with its men, its kine, its daily hum of life and labour ; on the other, the graveyard, with its silent tombs, and its motionless, unspeaking dust ; and yet how indissoluble the link of connection between the two ! The hamlet's forefathers are sleeping their last sleep in the graveyard ; its present occupiers, though now rejoicing in the might and power of existence, are all on their way to the same resting-place. On the foundation of this thought the poet erects a structure of reflection which, step by step, as he proceeds, assumes vaster and grander proportions,

the whole being pervaded by a tender yet lofty vein of moralising. There is to me a wonderful power in those very opening words, simple as they are: "Beneath those rugged elms." You feel at once as if a spell were thrown over you, and that you must listen to the end. And as the poet continues his song, the fascination to which you at first succumbed grows deeper, and holds you with an intenser grasp. How one pauses over, and revels in, with an ecstasy too great for words, that line, "The breezy call of incense-breathing morn!" Such language; such a subtle combination of the melodies of words! Heavens! you can almost taste the line! Literally, your mouth is filled with the fragrant morning air and the sweets of early dawn. What ambrosial nectar sip of poesy it is! Stolen honey from Elysium itself—viands of such divine delicacy as the gods themselves might not disdain! In due course we arrive at the two stanzas in which those well-known lines occur: "Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest;" and, "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen;" and scores and scores of times as they have been on our lips, we repeat them with an unction as strong as ever, and with the old undying delight in their supreme beauty. It is useless to tell us that these household treasures—these poetical *Lares et Penates*—are not originalities; be they plagiarisms or paraphrases, they are presented to us in a dress so fresh and striking, that, without stopping to inquire too minutely into their antecedents, we receive them with open arms, and take them to our hearts at once; and no power on earth shall ever persuade us to withdraw from them our old-fashioned and deeply-rooted affection. In such a poem as "The Elegy" you can scarcely say that you have a decided preference for any one particular line or stanza; for as surely as you make a selection some equally deserving rival puts in a claim to favour. This couplet, however, I must confess, is a special favourite of mine—

"And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die."

If you read over, slowly and carefully, these two lines, you will be surprised at the perfection of decadence in each separate syllable; it is as if they were marching in exact time and solemnly to solemn music. As I read them I am reminded of those grand low tones of a cathedral organ, which steal on the ear with such ravishment before the voluntary has yet burst into the louder strains of praise and triumph. These are lines which, with their infinite concentration of harmony, linger lastingly on the ear: they are of the "things of beauty" which are "a joy for ever." In the original MS. of "The Elegy" there is a stanza which was never incorporated with the

printed copy. Mason considers it as fine as any in the poem, and probably most people will concur in that opinion.

"Hark ! how the sacred calm that breathes around
Bids every fierce tumultuous passion cease ;
In still small accents whispering from the ground
A grateful earnest of eternal peace."

Could anything more exactly realise and reproduce the influence of the hour ? The very temper of the time, as it hovered invisibly in its ethereal essences over the spirit, has been forcibly snatched and subtly hidden in words.

And now, my friend, whom a foolish fancy has placed by my side on this grassy bank, we have come to the closing stanzas of our poem, and I should like to make one or two comments on them ; I give you my word these comments shall be brief, for I find that enthusiasm, however strong, is but sorry proof against the chill of a January evening. In the previous verses we have been borne along by a sustained and increasing interest in moralisings of the utmost beauty on the lives and fortunes of a humble class of people ; and now the poet would invoke our sympathies and attention as he introduces us to an individual man, and tells us graphically and with genuine feeling his touching story. What a complete biography do these six stanzas contain ! How close and full is our acquaintance with this gentle melancholy youth, and how lively is the interest we take in his way of life ! A tender mystery seems to hang over him as we behold him up with the lark of morning—the solitary figure

"Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn ;"

or stretching himself listlessly by the brook in the noon-tide heat ; or wandering by the wood with "saddened downcast look," muttering his wayward fancies to himself as he goes along. At once our sympathies flow out to him. "Who can this lonely dejected spirit be ?" we ask ourselves. "What grief is it that seems for ever feeding at his heart ?" We soon begin regularly to watch for him, for our interest in him grows keener every day. The spots where his fancies led him have come to be sacred in our eyes ; he haunts them like a good genius ; we love to meet him, and to glance pityingly at him as he passes, wondering in our hearts at his apparently strange destiny. And then, alas ! there comes a day when we look for him in vain ; nowhere in his favourite haunts is he to be found. Nor are we left long in doubt as to the reason of his absence ; that mournful procession winding slowly through the wicket tells its own tale ; the archer, Death, has struck him down, and our gentle recluse has passed, man-like, from among us. We feel as if we had lost a personal friend ; and sincere are the tears we shed to his memory, and

fervent and many the benedictions we breathe over his dust. As we read the epitaph on the aged thorn, a sad pleasure fills our hearts. It was, then, no unworthy object that so mysteriously won our affections. This musing spirit whom we loved to meet in our walks had "a tear for pity, and a hand open as day for melting charity;" and the great desire of his heart was for some ready sympathising brother-mortal, with whom he might "take sweet counsel." Cordially do we reciprocate the holy tenderness of feeling expressed in the last lines of the epitaph—

"No further seek his merits to disclose,
Nor draw his frailties from their dark abode,
Where they alike in trembling hope repose,
The bosom of his father and his God."

To me, my friend, there is a peculiar charm in the closing verses of this poem. I feel as if no personal history that I had ever before read had been able so powerfully to awake my interests, and call forth my sympathies. I think there is true art evinced in such a conclusion. Imagination loves to be led on from universals to particulars. At the beginning of the poem our interests are directed into various channels, distributed over a wide surface; but their whole strength is gathered together, and concentrated on one point at the close. As you read "The Elegy," you seem listening throughout to a subdued melodious song, of which the harmony is never broken. It leaves just such full lingering delight on the ear as do those sweet notes which often, in an autumn evening, come to us through the mellow air from some jocund band of reapers not far distant. What an exquisite smack of rurality there is about it! It is redolent of the upturned glebe; of ivy-covered church; of grassy graveyard mould; of latticed cottage and thatched hayrick; of the milking of kine, the whetting of scythe, the hum of bees; of smocked, rosy-faced swains and buxom lads and lasses; of all country sights and sounds, and all country sweetnesss and delights. Everybody, I suppose, has heard the story of Wolfe repeating "The Elegy" to his officers a little before he fell on the heights of Abraham, and the comment he made on it when he had finished. It seems a strange enthusiasm, yet I can't wonder at it. One can fancy the great general dwelling with particular emphasis on that line, "The paths of glory lead but to the grave." It is so applicable as regards his own case; and perhaps when he repeated it he felt a presentiment that his brilliant career of glory was approaching its inevitable termination. As I look round at the memorial erected to Gray, I cannot help thinking with how much reason he might have appropriated the lofty boast of the Roman poet, "*Exegi monumentum ære perennius.*"

THE BOATMAN

"PULL, boatman—pull! Haste, boatman—haste! my love is far away;
I must be at her side before the rising of the day.

On yonder isle that darkly looms between the sea and sky,
She lives; and with the dawn's first smile beside her must I lie.

The boatman sternly raised his eyes, and sternly he replied,
"Nor morn nor mistress cheer the hearts that chill beneath the tide!"

"Beneath the tide there lie who must—peace with their spirits be!

But tell me not of chilly hearts while hers still beats for me.

But yesternight I left her arms; already does my breast

Pant for her, like a wandering bird that yearns toward his nest!"

The boatman said, with bitter tone, as still he plied his oar,

"Once at the bottom of the sea, the bosom pants no more!"

"What! always of the dead you speak! You speak to me in vain;

To-night for me she trims her lamp, to guide me o'er the main.

In absence I sleep not, nor she; at morn we'll mock the light,

And in the sun we'll dream away the sorrows of to-night."

The boatman's brow shrank up, as if with inward agony:

He said "They neither part nor watch who in the waters lie!"

"Now, by the heavens! art thou, perchance, a comer from the dead,

Thou croaker of ill-omen? Cease thy strain, and pull a-head!

If life has not a charm for thee, then labour at thy beam,

And hold thy peace; disturb me not, and let me dream my dream."

The boatman burst out in a laugh that made his hearer quake,

And said, "If you are dreaming now, ere long you will awake!"

He rose up to his feet. He was a dark and sinewed man;

The moon looked on his face; his cheek was trenched with care, and wan;

His matted locks obscured his brow, but, shining in its gloom,

Two glaring eyes danced wildly out, like meteors on a tomb.

He stood, like some unearthly thing, all ominous and dark,

And pointed grimly to the wave that fretted round the bark.

"You ask me why I speak of death? Because we now are two,

And my boat can never reach the land and carry me and you!

Both cannot live! The woman who awaits you by the wave,—

That woman was my goddess once, and now—she is your slave!

You have been blest, and I am lorn. I care not which one fall,—

But to contain two men like us the universe is small!"

A struggle, and the little boat rocked sullen too and fro;

Then came a splash—and then arose a smothered cry of woe!

The waters heaved up white and rough, the rising winds did moan;

The boatman hearkened for a voice,—no sound! He was alone!

He sat him to his oars again, and rowed—he knew not where;

For no one trimmed a lamp for him—he could not go to *her*!

LITTLE LILLIE

"You wish to hear my story again, Lucy;—why, how many times have you listened to it?"

"Oh! a great many times, uncle; but do, please, tell me once more, for Ellen Cleeves has never heard it, and she is so anxious to hear you tell about your——"

"Hush!" I cried, stopping her before she could finish the sentence; and, feeling that Lucy's appeal could not be resisted, I thus began:—

"I was walking in one of the most secluded parts of the Kensington-gardens, as was my wont, when the sound of woe attracted my attention. Looking about to discover whence the tones of distress proceeded, I found a little girl (apparently about five years old) amongst the trees, crying bitterly. I went to her, took her by the hand, and inquired into the cause of her grief. She could not speak, on account of her deep sobs, for some little time; but after a while, becoming more composed, and accustomed to my presence, she said that she had been left there by her mamma, about half-an-hour ago, and did not think that she would ever come back again.

"I comforted her, wiped her eyes, and told her that I would stay with her until her mother returned. In a few minutes she seemed as happy and gay as the little robins who were hopping about on the grass and singing near us. I made her pick daisies for me, and took her to the pond to see the ducks; then we went and sat under the trees, and I put questions to her with a view of finding out where she lived. She could not tell me the name of the place when I put the question to her direct; but as she constantly mentioned 'Quarlton,' I thought she must have come from some place of that designation near London. So I asked her if there were many houses near the one she had lived in, and she said: 'Not any at Quarlton, and only one for a long way off, and that is Mr. Sims's; but I am not allowed to speak to any one, and never see anybody: nurse won't let me. Only nurse lives there, and "the doctor" comes to see me sometimes, and kisses me, and calls me his "own darling Lillie."' When I spoke to her of her mother, she said: 'I had no mamma till a little time ago; then one came, and nurse said I must love her because she was my mamma. But I didn't love her at all; she only kissed me once, and took me away from Quarlton, and brought me where there were so many people, and such a number of carriages, and we slept there last night in such a large house; and I cried all night, and asked her to take me home to nurse; and she was cross, and slapped me, and said she should

soon leave me, but I did not think she meant to then. She gave me some bread-and-butter this morning, and a bit of ham on it, and some tea with sugar in it; and I thought she was kinder, for she gave me a kiss. She hadn't kissed me before, and I like people to kiss me: nurse always does, and says she loves me. Then she took me for a ride in such a large carriage, with lots of people in it, and there was one gentleman so kind he pinched my cheek (but he did not hurt me), and said I was "a nice little woman," and then kissed me.' I felt that the gentleman who said that was a man of discrimination, and followed his example by pressing my lips to the dear little child's forehead. My little friend then continued her tale:—'She made me get out of the large carriage when we got to the beginning of this field, and then we came in at some gates, and had such a long walk, and saw a pretty river, with some dear little ducks on it, just like those,' pointing to the birds on the 'round pond.' 'Then we went over a bridge, and she brought me to these trees, and told me to sit down while she went to fetch me some cakes and water. I was so hot and tired, and so thirsty, that I did not mind her leaving me, but I didn't think she would never come back. Will you take me to nurse? for I do not want to see mamma again—I don't like her. Don't let her take me away again!'

"So I promised that I would take her to nurse, and that her mamma should not have possession of her. For I did not say that, if her mamma claimed her, I had no legal right to detain her, for I felt sure that she would not understand the force of the remark, and that the fact which it expressed would make her unhappy. I said, therefore, that she must come home with me that night, and that I would find out where her nurse was on the morrow.

"She seemed to place entire confidence in me, and said she should like to go to my house—'but couldn't nurse come there, too?' I had some difficulty in making her understand that I did not yet know where Quarlton was, and must discover that before I could find nurse. She said that she knew where it was, but couldn't go there from that field, for she would not know 'how to begin.' So at last she was quite content with the thought of going home with me alone.

"When we began to move away I found that she was so tired she could scarcely stand, so I took her up in my arms and carried her. She looked into my face with her beautiful blue eyes, smiling her thanks, then put both arms round my neck and fairly hugged me, and—most unfairly—almost strangled me. Fortunately for me, my home—only a lodging—was not very far from the Gardens, for I found my burden anything but a light one, and was once or twice sadly tempted to let her drop, and run away from her; but I resisted

the evil promptings of—something or other—and toiled on. On arriving at my home, I immediately summoned the landlady to my presence, told her of my adventure, showed her the spoil, and earnestly entreated her assistance in helping me to look after my young friend. It is but justice to a very numerous class, and one not standing well in public estimation, that I should bear testimony to having received much kindness from, and been well treated by, more than one lodging-house keeper. My landlady was a most motherly, honest body, and if she did sometimes regale me with a feast of the *bons mots* of the late Mr. Brown, it was done with the best intention, for she used often to say ‘how pleasant it must be to have some one to say a cheerful word to you, being so much alone.’ I did not let her know that I thoroughly agreed with the literal meaning of her words, but not with the interpretation she meant me to put upon them, for I knew that kindness was the motive power of her actions.

“Mrs. Brown, as a matter of course, expressed endless surprise when I told her how I had picked up my little charge, and suggested all kinds of solutions of the mystery. She had no doubt ‘she would turn out to be a princess, stolen for the sake of her clothes and her money,’ and wanted me to take little Lillie to Buckingham Palace at once, saying that I could ‘go in the back way, so that the Queen should not know anything about it if, by any chance, it should turn out that the child was not a princess of England; but, for herself, she had no doubt on the subject.’ It was utterly useless my reasoning with her that I found the young lady properly clothed, and that it was unlikely for one so young to have any money about her; for she at once quashed all such arguments by saying that the thief had of course taken ‘the fine clothes all covered with jewels,’ and had substituted the garments in which Lillie was clad when I found her; and though the material of those even were good, I might be quite sure that it was nothing to that of the clothes which had been stolen. Mrs. Brown concluded her oration by asking me if she should send for a cab to take me at once to the palace, for if I did not give up the child directly I might be apprehended in my bed for kidnapping. However, I resisted the whole force of her reasoning, refused her offer of a cab, and endeavoured to prove that it was not possible that my little friend could be a princess; it then suddenly occurred to me that there was no member of the English Royal Family of that age, and so I told my landlady in rather a crowning tone, but she was not all disconcerted, and said at once—‘then she must have been stole from some of the lords in Belgrave-square, and so you will find out.’ There we dropped the subject, and I begged Mrs. Brown to wash Lillie, and make her tidy, and then we would have some dinner, which had been ordered for about that time.

"While Lillie was upstairs, I sat down and tried to collect my thoughts a little, for this adventure had somewhat ruffled my usual steady-going habits. I felt very much as I did once before, when a little dog followed me home and would not leave me. I took him in, fed him, played with him, gave him sleeping accommodation for the night; and the next morning, as soon as the street-door was opened, off he scampered and I never saw him again. As I sat there thinking, I fancied it was the dog I was now making arrangements for, and that the landlady was finding a pinafore for him, to prevent gravy from being spilt over his beautifully glossy coat; but I was suddenly set right on that score by finding two arms clasped round my neck, and there was the dear child before me.

"Dinner being ready, little Lillie was set at one end of the table, and I sat at the other; but that disposition of forces did not chime in with the young lady's notions of tactics, so she made a flank movement and seated herself by my side. I do not think a dinner party ever passed off so pleasantly to me as that one. The whole thing was new, and Lillie was as good as a child could be, and prattled away so prettily, asking numberless questions. When I was a child the rule in our household used to be 'no talking at meal times;' my little companion could not have been taught that lesson, for I never heard any human being chatter so incessantly; but she made a very good meal at the same time.

"After dinner, I settled myself in an arm-chair, and Lillie, seeming very somniferous, crept on my lap to be nursed. But we were not permitted to enjoy such quietude for any length of time, for the landlady came in to see 'how we got on,' and to hear whether we should like some tea. She was so much charmed with the scene, that she rushed across the room and kissed Lillie most boisterously, and I was in deadly fear lest she should include me in her caresses; and much as I respected the old soul, I could not have submitted to such a display of affection as that. However, as she stopped short of me I could not complain, so I gave her a glass of wine as a thank-offering, and begged her to drink our health.

"I soon sent my little charge to bed under the care of Mrs. Brown, who promised to see that she was made comfortable; and before I retired for the night I was taken up to have a peep at her as she lay asleep. With lips parted as though she was smiling, one hand resting on the counterpane and the other supporting her head, she looked the very picture of happy innocence.

"When I went to bed I could not sleep, and as I tossed about I thought of what had happened during the day. For it is an event in the life of a quiet, unmarried man of six-and-twenty years of age to find himself suddenly encumbered with the charge of a little

girl. What was I to do with her? First I hoped I should find her parents; then I thought I should be miserable if I did, and would keep her in hiding. Then I settled that I would educate her until she was old enough to be my wife. (I was not engaged to be married, nor had I seen any one to whom I should have cared to unite myself for life. I did not like the London misses, who, as a rule, think of nothing but dress, gaiety, and how to catch husbands; and I seldom saw any country girls, whom I infinitely prefer in a general way.) The matrimonial scheme took my fancy amazingly, in my sleepy state, and I plunged headlong into aerial bricks and mortar with the most astonishing energy. Every obstacle that my prudent self suggested I levelled at once, and I saw the whole of my future life as clearly defined as if it had been written out and presented to me in a handsome volume bound in morocco. And, thus engaged, I seemed to doze, but my thoughts were still employed on the same subject. I fancied, however, that I was married to Lillie, and that my friends considered me a fool for wedding one so young. I argued with them that not only was she Princess of Kensington-gardens, and had the privilege of cooking the ducks in the 'round pond,' but she was also Mrs. Brown's daughter, so that we could still live comfortably in our present abode. This conclusive reasoning had the effect of waking me (as it seemed), and finding that it was quite light, I got up and took a walk before breakfast.

"When I returned from my matutinal stroll, Lillie had just been brought downstairs by Mrs. Brown, and I thought, as she ran to greet me, that I had never seen such a lovely little creature. Her golden hair was hanging loosely down her back, and the sun, which was shining brightly at the time, seemed to stretch forth his rays to kiss her, and produced quite a halo round her head. The little creature had much to tell me about the night's rest, and the kindness she had received from Mrs. Brown, who, she said, was 'almost as nice as nurse.'

"Breakfast, with us, was an operation which extended over a long period of time,—for Lillie, like many of her sex, talked very fast, and, consequently, ate slowly. But when we had finished the meal, I really did not know what to do next. I felt that, if I intended to try and discover the young lady's belongings, no time should be lost. What was to be the first step, though? I did not wish to put the case in the hands of the police, for I wanted to work it quietly by myself, if possible; but how was I to set about it? A brilliant thought flashed across my mind: I would look at 'Bradshaw,' to see where Quarlton was, and whether there was any station there; for I must confess that I never heard of the place before I found my little companion. I discovered, however, on

reference to the pages of that great railway authority, that Quarlton was on the 'London and Central Counties' line, and distant from the metropolis twenty-five miles. Very few trains stopped there; but at Bradley, only two miles further, nearly all the trains stopped; so I decided that I would go to Bradley in the afternoon, stay the night there, and drive to Quarlton the next morning. This course determined upon, I told Mrs. Brown of my intention, and asked her to purchase such articles of clothing as Lillie might require—for I had settled to take her with me.

"Soon after this we were in the train, the guard had shouted to the driver of the engine, 'All right be'ind!' the whistle had sounded, and we were on our journey to Bradley. At the station Lillie had recognised the building as the one she had arrived at from Quarlton two days before; but she said that the 'room' in which we travelled (a first-class carriage) was much more comfortable than the one she came from Quarlton in. I pointed out to Lillie all the objects of interest which we passed during the journey, and found myself—most papa-like—explaining anything she did not understand. Just out of London I gave a lecture on gasometers, water-works, and candle-making. Further on, the subjects were agricultural, and with them she was more at home, though she did not possess a very clear knowledge of the practical details of farming. I knew very little more than she did, but was quite surprised at my eloquence when explaining the object of tilling land, of rearing sheep, cows, pigs, chickens, &c. It was an entirely new sensation to me, thus acting the part of instructor, and I became so interested in my occupation that, long before I was aware of our proximity to Bradley, the train drew up at a station, and the porters announced to us the fact that we had arrived at our destination by shouting out 'Bra-ly! Braa-ly!' with the whole force of their lungs.

"When we got into the town—a very short distance from the station—we looked about leisurely for what appeared to be the most comfortable hotel. I soon found the very thing I wanted, not in the High-street—for so, of course, the principal thoroughfare was called—but in a quiet corner of the borough. The house of entertainment bore the regal title of 'The Crown and Sceptre,' but if I had judged by the painting on the sign-board, I should have called it 'The Wicker Basket and Parsnip Rampant.' However, the interior was all that we could desire, and the good dame who kept the inn was the very perfection of an English hostess. How we English people do love a kindly, smiling, substantial-looking woman! Such was Mrs. Somebody. I explained just enough of my story to interest her in Lillie, and make her wish to know more, ordered some food to be ready in about an hour, and then walked out with my little companion to lionise the town. It

was a good deal like other English country towns, but possessed two distinctive characteristics—a fine old church and market-cross, both of them good specimens of Early English architecture. The shops were very good, and the streets, though narrow, were generally clean.

“I need not describe the meal at the inn, nor the night’s rest. After breakfast the next morning I hired an open carriage, and, inquiring the direction of Quarlton, started off to drive Lillie to that locality. We had scarcely got clear of the town when a vivid flash of lightning, followed by a terrific peal of thunder, startled our horse, and away he bolted. I tried, with all my power, to restrain him, but in vain. On he galloped—he seemed to fly, his feet scarcely touching the ground. To my intense horror, I discovered that the road made a sharp curve to the right, not many yards from where we were, and that, if I could not succeed in turning the horse’s head, we must inevitably be dashed over a bank and then down a steep precipice beyond.

“I had hardly realised this fact when—crash! . . . There I lay, very much shaken, but not hurt, when I was startled by what sounded like a violent knocking. I quickly raised myself on one hand, but what sight met my astonished gaze? Was I really in my senses? Yes, for I pinched myself, and by so doing produced incontestable evidence that my sense of feeling was remarkably acute. But I could with difficulty credit even this powerful proof; for I found that, instead of having been upset, there was I comfortably in bed at my quiet lodgings, and that the noise which I had heard had been produced by the concussion of the servant’s knuckles against the door of my room, and on looking at my watch I discovered that I was nearly an hour later than I usually lay a-bed.

“The whole story of finding Lillie had been a dream! I really felt quite melancholy at first to think that I had thus lost the beautiful child, but after a time it was a great relief to me to feel that I had not the worry of looking for her natural, or unnatural, guardians.”

Thus ended my tale. One of my hearers, to whom it was new, would not for a time believe that what I had described was merely the current of my thoughts during sleep, and wished me—entreated me—to confess that I was deceiving her by saying that it was a dream. But I could not. All the details of that dream are still as vividly impressed on my mind as any events which have occurred to me during my waking hours. And even now, when looking back at the particulars of that night’s vision, I can scarcely credit my maturer judgment, which assures me that there is no foundation in fact for the story of “Little Lillie,” and that the whole tale was the

production of my over-worked imagination, during a time when it should be at rest.

The causes which operate on the mind to produce dreams have been discussed so often, without any satisfactory consequences flowing from the investigations, that I will not add to the number of such-like inquiries. Lord Byron, in a paper to the *Spectator*, has considered "the utility of dreams," but without any important result. However, if the account of my dream affords a few minutes interest or amusement to any of my readers, I shall feel that I have discovered the real utility of such-like delusions.

H. R.

LATHOM HOUSE

List, and lend attentive ear,
 Ye who love well-foughten fields,
 And, with glowing fancy, hear
 Clash of spears and clang of shields,
 Erst the Earl of Derby's spouse,
 Loyal to her absent lord,
 Hold, most nobly, Lathom House,
 In despite of fire and sword.

To the trumpet's martial peal,
 Sounding over hill and swamp,
 Came a messenger, in steel,
 From the Parliamentary camp.
 "Fairfax, with his army, lay
 But a little league from thence,
 And besought, ere fall of day,
 With the countess conference."

Came Sir Thomas, in his train
 Men inured to civil broil;
 And he thus, in courteous strain,
 Spoke to her he held in toil—
 "Lady, Lathom House must be
 Stormed, unless you yield it mine.
 If surrendered, you are free;
 Take to Knowsley thee and thine."

Clear her silvery accents ring—
 "Double trust do I hold here:
 I am loyal to my king,
 And my lord true cavalier.
 They consenting, Lathom's thine;
 Grant me, knight, a short delay;
 They dissenting, Lathom's mine:
 I will hold it, come what may."

Sounding over hill and swamp,
 To the trumpet's martial peal,
 From the Parliamentary camp
 Came a messenger, in steel.
 Fourteen days and nights had fled,
 Fairfax, duped, had made delay;
 Deeming that the lack of bread
 Starved them in that castle gray.

And again the countess said—
 Haught of speech, and proud of eye,
 Through the long delay so made
 Nerved anew to win or die—
 "Still I love my king and lord,
 Still I hold the Church most dear,
 Still I hold me to my word:
 Lathom House is cavalier."

Batteries rose, and lines were drawn,
 Trenches dug around the moat;
 Night, and noon, and early morn,
 Roared the cannon's iron throat;
 Musket balls and shot of size
 Rained in wrath on Lathom House,
 While its rampart's gruff replies
 Cheer'd the absent earl's great spouse.

And, the castle gates hurled back,
 Day succeeding day, with cheers,
 Pressing on each other's track,
 Sallied forth the Cavaliers.
 Many a Roundhead fell, to rise
 From the bloody dust no more;
 Many a dainty lady's eyes
 Wept for her lost Theodore.

Once, inspired with wondrous zeal,
 Forth they poured, a surging tide
 And their foemen, taking heel,
 Broke and fled on every side.
 Cannon, spiked, were rudely rolled
 Down into the weedy moat,
 Trenches levelled up with mould,
 Iron choked the mortar's throat.

So some hours of peace were won,
 Quiet sleep to hand and breast,
 Welcome to the garrison,
 Sorely tried and needing rest.
 From the Parliamentary camp,
 Once again to trumpet peal,
 Sounding over hill and swamp,
 Rode a herald clad in steel.

Fierce in words, and insolent,
Galling to the lofty dame,
Was the surly message sent
By a leader void of shame.
Deigning not a smooth reply,
Thus the countess spoke in hate,
“Go tell the rebel Rigby, I
Hang his next herald at the gate.”

Roundhead shot came pouring in,
Smiting fiercely on the walls,
And a loud incessant din
Echoed through the oaken halls.
Brave relief was drawing near :
Rupert, on his march to York,
Turned aside, and, sore in fear,
Rigby stayed his bloody work.
Often toasted at carouse,
After skirmish fierce, or foray,
Was the siege of Lathom House,
And the countess, famed in story.

Once again the storm arose
To its height round Lathom House,
Desperate Cavaliers, on foes,
Sallying for the earl's brave spouse.

ROBT. F. HANNAY.

NOTES FROM AN OLD MAID'S DIARY

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.

THE vicissitudes of life occasionally bring us into contact with strange characters. While wealth and prosperity surround us, and as long as we are sheltered in the charmed circle of a well-regulated and well-appointed home, we know little of the outer world. Those we choose for our friends, and admit as our acquaintances, form our ideas of mankind in general; it is left to the world's wanderers to discover other and more startling phases of the human family. It is those whom circumstances have deprived of a home, and who are obliged to seek shelter at the firesides of others, that gain an insight into the peculiarities of that large mass of beings whose varied habits, feelings, and ideas, make up the sum of the world's history. I, alas! am one of earth's homeless ones; deprived of my father in middle age, whose income died with him, I had no relations to offer me a home—no friends who claimed me. After paying several visits to former acquaintances, I determined to enter some family as a resident boarder, and thereby secure society and independence with home comforts. The only means of accomplishing my wishes appeared to be that of advertisement, and, after some deliberation as to the wording of my wants, I drew up the following lines, which I sent to the *Times* :—

“WANTED—By a single lady, board and residence with some family of respectability, where she would meet with the comforts of a refined home and cheerful society. The highest references given and required. Address, Beta, Post-office, St. John's Wood.”

In nervous anxiety I awaited the result of this very independent step, hoping that among the numerous London residents one or two might notice and favour my appeal, and take compassion on my lonely lot. Two days after the insertion of the above, I left my cousin's house in town, where I was for the time staying. Sallying forth alone, I timidly made the inquiry at the post-office whether there were any letters waiting for “Beta?” The official replied in the affirmative, and instead of presenting me with *one* or *two*, threw down a perfect shoal of missives, all unmistakably addressed to “Beta, Post-office, St. John's Wood.” Could they be meant for me? I was utterly confounded at being the object of so much public interest, and became confused lest the official should recognise me as the identical “Beta.” Not trusting myself to speak, I mechanically opened my reticule, which he soon as rapidly

filled, and hastened to retrace my steps, and did not pause until I had locked myself in my own room. Then, in no small state of excitement, I began to examine my load. There were no less than ninety-seven replies to my advertisement, and, as I opened them one by one, I began to feel myself a person of some importance, so earnestly did all the writers assure me "how delighted they should be, if they could persuade me to become a member of their circle." So many and various, also, were the advantages held out in each reply, that I at once saw how difficult would be my selection. Many of the writers named the terms, while Lady B——, and the Honourable Mrs. C——, whose daughters had lately married, and who desired society more than pecuniary advantage, would be satisfied, they said, with the nominal sum of £200 per annum. A. L., writing from her suburban villa, where an only daughter was an invalid and desired companionship, assured "Beta" of a refined home for £120 a-year. Many letters I opened were but the stereotyped copies of one another. At last I broke the seal of one which had a somewhat more bulky form than the rest, and to my astonishment drew out a small green book, whilst judge of my indignation when I saw inscribed on the title-page, "How to Win a Lover." Alas! I thought, I have often heard of the indignities to which unprotected females are subjected, and I began to turn over in my mind who of all my acquaintance could have ventured thus to insult me. On further consideration I remembered it was an anonymous communication, and therefore I could not charge any one person with the crime. Soon curiosity mastered my anger, and I ventured to glance at the pages thus furtively placed in my hands. The work was certainly original, for, after a short preface concerning the thousands of both sexes who are yearly doomed to celibacy, and its consequent loneliness and unsettled position, for want of an introduction to a suitable partner, it referred me to an office in London where such unfortunate bachelors or single ladies as might wish to change their state could, on payment of a certain sum down, and a further fee when married, have their happiness completed and meet with desirable acquaintances. Indignant as I felt, I could not help being amused at the plausible manner in which the "honour, integrity, and ability" of the head of the office were guaranteed, while the most inviolable confidence and secrecy were to be relied on, so that the feelings of the most sensitive lady might not be offended. Photographs were to be exchanged, and, while the old saying was quoted, that "marriages are made in heaven," it was added that in matrimony, as well as other affairs, "Heaven helps those who help themselves." This interesting little book further stated that hundreds of cases had been satisfactorily arranged, and such marriages had turned out most happy unions. It

ended by sending a given number of rules for any party wishing to benefit by the advice of this enterprising individual. No less, it stated, than 5000 couples had been paired since the opening of the office, and a little accompanying note kindly informed me there were several gentlemen's names entered—one a retired officer with a fortune of £60,000, a squire with £4000 per annum, and other equally desirable parties, who were ready, should I decide on becoming a candidate for a husband, to enter into correspondence and receive my photograph. Further information should be sent by return of post if I enclosed the fee. What a speculative scheme! I have since heard that its promoters send these little green missives in every direction; and I have met with other single ladies, who, to like advertisements, have received the same proposals. Doubtless, some may have been entrapped into sending the £5 demanded. But having no particular taste for such matrimonial speculation, I replaced my green book into its envelope, locked it up lest any one should learn I had ever received such a communication, and then turned to continue the perusal of my letters. After opening three or four more I at last came to one, the locality of which suited me, and the terms were also such as the limits of my purse would sanction. The writer's name, too, I thought I recognised as that of a lady from my own neighbourhood in the country, of whom I knew something, having heard from mutual friends that she had been left a widow in reduced circumstances some years previously. Mrs. Green wrote stating that she could at the present time offer me a home in her family circle, which consisted of her daughter and herself, with occasionally a few select visitors, that would, she felt, add to the cheerfulness of the party; that her terms were only £1 per week, exclusive of wine, spirits, &c. The situation was Bayswater, where Mrs. Green would be happy to see me, should I feel disposed to call and talk the matter over with her; that she would stay at home the next day until four p.m., in expectation of a visit from me. There could be no harm in this—just calling to look about me, I thought; so accordingly I made my way there at the time appointed, and found the house very pleasantly situated in one of the most open parts of Bayswater. It was a cottage residence, detached, in a neighbourhood which was a few years since quite in the country, but which is now divided by squares and streets, and almost surrounded by large houses, terraces, and villas. I was ushered into a pretty double room neatly furnished, opening into a small garden, from which the scent of roses and jessamine entered and pervaded the air. What a luxury, I thought, for London! Presently an elderly lady entered, accompanied, I concluded, by her daughter; the former bearing the remains of great beauty, the latter more

homely in her appearance, but with a most good-natured expression of countenance. They introduced themselves as Mrs. and Miss Green, and in a short time I felt quite at home with them. We entered upon the business of my visit. All my inquiries were satisfactorily answered—every desirable arrangement volunteered. I then saw the sleeping apartment that was to be placed at my disposal; after which I passed into the garden, where Miss Green opened the door of a little conservatory. They assured me I should find the family a most united one, and that everything they could do to conduce to my comfort would be arranged. In fact, before I had time to say "I would take the matter into consideration," which had been the course I had previously intended to adopt, I found I had so far committed myself in assenting to their views and wishes, that they considered it a decided thing that I should join the family. But appearances promised well, and as there was no object in delay, I agreed to take up my residence with them at the commencement of the following week.

When I arrived in my new quarters, Mrs. and Miss Green were alone; but in the course of the evening the young lady told me that they were expecting the next day to receive a most agreeable couple, Captain and Mrs. Bedford, friends of a friend of theirs, who wished to pass a short time in town: "And," she added, "it would be so nice, as then they should have the benefit of a gentleman's escort to any place of public amusement, and she was sure I should like both the husband and wife."

The next day Captain Bedford and his lady duly arrived. Mrs. Bedford had been handsome, and dressed very well. He was quiet and polite. We saw little of them during the day, as they told us they had many friends in the neighbourhood with whom they were anxious to spend as much time as possible, but they always came in most punctually to dinner at six p.m.; after which we played a rubber, or I was invited to go to the piano, being somewhat a proficient in music, as was also Mrs. Bedford, so that our evenings passed pleasantly. After a fortnight's residence I began to think myself fortunate in my selection of a home; the only drawback was, that as Mrs. Green kept but one servant, the attendance and routine of household arrangements was not so well apportioned as I had been accustomed to. I observed, also, that Miss Green was not always to be found; that she had many housewifely duties, and was not above rendering assistance in the kitchen, for I sometimes met her early in the morning in an undefined costume, scarcely assimilating to the lady who was to share our social circle in the evening.

It was about this period of my residence at Rose Cottage, when, one evening, as I was engaged playing at chess with Captain Bed-

ford, the street-bell rang, and the servant announced "A visitor!" The Bedfords instantly rose and gave him a very warm welcome, introducing him to me as their dear and valued friend, "Charles Raven." Miss Green, who was also in the room, came forward and shook hands with him; whilst in the course of the evening she found opportunity to whisper to me that Mr. Raven was an author, a man of family and talent, that he was the friend who had introduced the Bedfords to them, &c. An author! Like many other persons I had a kind of veneration for literary characters, imagining them to be beings of a different order to the generality of mortals, whom it must be a privilege to meet and associate with. I therefore turned to take in a good view of Mr. Raven. He was a slight-made man of a symmetrical figure, decidedly handsome. His forehead was high and expanded (what author's is not? I thought); his eyes dark and deep-set, his features regular and his complexion pale. Altogether the countenance before me was refined and interesting, and I was at once pre-possessed in Mr. Raven's favour. His voice, too, completed the illusion; it was very melodious, while there was that ease of manner and graceful address that bespoke the gentleman. After apologising for interrupting me in my game, he insisted on Captain Bedford resuming his place, and then turned to Mrs. Bedford, and carried on an easy conversation with her, a portion of which reached us while at play. After the game was concluded, Mr. Raven drew his chair near me, and I soon found myself in earnest conversation with the new-comer. "Did I catch your name aright?" he asked—"Miss Linley; are you any way connected with the Linleys of Somerville? My father was well acquainted with that family." I said I believed we were distantly related, and he then proceeded to relate several anecdotes of people whose names were familiar to me, with all of whom he seemed to be on a very intimate footing. After tea Mr. Raven took his departure, and Mrs. Green asked me if I did not think him a charming man—so well-informed—so clever. I assented, and Captain Bedford then chimed in, saying Mr. Raven's acquaintance was indeed a privilege, for his talents were first-rate, and although his modesty made him publish his works under an assumed name, he was a most rising literary character, and his interest among influential people very great. I inquired what books he had written. "Oh," said Mrs. Bedford, "I shall be happy to lend you one if you have not seen it;" and leaving the room, she returned with three volumes bound in green cloth, which I recognised as that very popular work that had lately appeared under the name of George Eliot—"Adam Bede." "Oh!" I

* It will be remembered that for some time the talented author of "Adam Bede" was only known as George Eliot.

exclaimed, "is Mr. Raven the author of 'Adam Bede?' I read it last month, and hear it is considered the cleverest work of the season, and from a tyro Mr. Raven instantly rose higher in my mind. The following fortnight that gentleman was a constant visitor and agreeable addition to our evening circle, generally dropping in to see his dear friends, the Bedfords, either taking a friendly dinner or tea, for Mrs. Green had brought up her country hospitality ideas into London. He was most welcome, too, for he had such a fund of anecdote and was so entertaining that soon his absence would occasion rather a blank to all of us. "I have been reading your last work, Mr. Raven," I said one evening, "and I like the volume so much. I have often in my day-dreams wished to know a few of the literary lions of society, and little thought when I joined Mrs. Green's circle that I should meet with so celebrated an author." Mr. Raven bowed, and replied carelessly, "The only credit I can claim is perhaps a little more originality than some authors possess, but then I have had advantages in a familiarity with society in all its grades, which does not, I am aware, fall to the lot of every one; but, Miss Linley, I shall only be too happy to further your wish of becoming acquainted with some of your favourite writers by a personal introduction. Of course we all know one another. I am going to-night to dine with Sir Lytton Bulwer, and but that it is to be a bachelors' party, I am so at home there that I would take upon myself to persuade Mrs. Bedford and yourself to accompany me. My heart bounded at the idea; I felt almost in the seventh heaven. Would the ambition of my life be one day realised? Should I ever have the good fortune to be in the same room as Sir Bulwer Lytton, of hearing him speak, of watching his conversational powers? I could not sufficiently express my gratitude to Mr. Raven, who reiterated his promise of taking the earliest opportunity of forwarding my wishes. I went to bed that night supremely happy, more than ever charmed with our intellectual and agreeable visitor. The next day a circumstance occurred which somewhat startled me. Mrs. Bedford was going to do a little shopping in Westbourne-grove, and invited me to accompany her. On our way I felt convinced I saw Mr. Raven in front of us, and pointed him out to my companion, suggesting that we should hasten on, that I might overtake him, to ask where I could procure some book he had recommended me to read the previous evening. We gained on him, and just as we were almost within speaking distance, the gentleman we followed turned his head. Had I been mistaken? Was it or was it not himself? I was perplexed beyond measure. No! but it was some one so exactly his ditto that I felt confused as I met his unreturned glance. There was one difference, however, which convinced me of my error: this person wore much more hair than

Mr. Raven; moustache and whiskers, too, were darker, yet in other respects the resemblance was astonishing. "Did you ever see such a likeness?" I asked Mrs. Bedford. "Do you think so?" replied that lady; "perhaps a little in figure, but not when you come close to him." I was a little in advance of my companion and took advantage of being so to run and get another view of the stranger as we passed him, so struck was I by the likeness. As I looked round he was close to her, and as she encountered him I distinctly saw him slip into her hand a piece of paper, which, without taking any notice, she conveyed to her pocket. I felt annoyed; if Mrs. Bedford knew the gentleman why had she not stopped to speak to him, or mentioned it when I had compared him to Mr. Raven? She, however, took no notice, entering at once into animated conversation, evidently thinking I had not been so observant. We soon commenced our business and entered a shop, where Mrs. Bedford made considerable purchases, and, exhausting the contents of her purse, she borrowed a sovereign from mine, after which we pursued our walk and returned home.

That evening again brought Mr. Raven to tea, and I rallied him on his double. He smiled, and said he should like to see him. I asked why? "Because," he replied, "I might then be able to more readily follow the advice I listened to in last Sunday's sermon, namely—'know thyself.'" I could not help laughing at this idea, when he added:—"Perhaps Miss Linley will do me the honour to take a turn with me in the Grove to-morrow, when I hope we may again meet this gentleman, and then you can compare our physiognomies."

The Bedfords had now been just five weeks at Mrs. Green's, when Mrs. Bedford took a severe cold, and kept her room for a few days. All this time her husband's devotion was extreme, and we saw little of him during her illness, except at meals. On one occasion I met him on the staircase, carrying down a huge packet, for which the parcels-delivery cart was waiting at the door. I stopped him to ask after his wife. He hesitated; then said she was better, and he had been trying to persuade her to come down that evening to dinner, as he said "it was so weakening always to remain in bed." Accordingly at six o'clock Mrs. Bedford made her appearance looking pale, and enveloped in a large cashmere shawl. Her husband was very careful that she should only take what was most suitable for an invalid. We were in the middle of the second course when we were all startled by a prolonged peal at the bell, such a ring as always betokens some one or something of importance. The maid, who was waiting nearly dropped the dish she was handing round, and depositing it on the table, hurried to the door immediately, returning with a telegraph despatch for Mrs. Bed-

ford. The lady opened it, and uttering a sigh and an exclamation, passed it on to her husband, saying—"Ah, poor Emma! Oh, William, I must go to her directly." "My love, it would be madness!" exclaimed her husband, after reading the despatch. "But indeed I must." "With your cold! The idea of such a thing!" was the response. "My dear, I should never forgive myself," returned Mrs. Bedford, rising in a flurried manner; "only think if anything should happen to dear Emma, and I not there!" "I cannot allow it, Matilda. Your health is of more consequence to me," replied Captain Bedford, in an excited tone. But Mrs. Bedford was decided, and carried her point. "Mrs. Green will, I am sure," she said, "let Mary help me just to pack up a few necessities. I have not a moment to spare, for I must catch the train which goes to Hastings at 7.10. William, love, do go and get a cab while I pack my carpet-bag." "Now, Mrs. Green, I ask you," pleaded Captain Bedford, "is it not madness? Do try your influence to prevent my wife undertaking such a journey in her present state."

We all tried our best, hoping there was no necessity for so rash a step; but Mrs. Bedford was deaf to remonstrances, and hastily quitting the table began to make her preparations, while the captain, after blustering a little, went for a cab, saying he wished telegraphs had never been invented, and he supposed he must take his wife to her sister and return by the next train. For the next ten minutes all was bustle and confusion. Miss Green herself packed up Mrs. Bedford's bag with a few things the latter lady solicited from her large travelling-box, which stood in the corner of her room. Laden with wraps, she came down, and hurriedly bidding us good bye, got into the cab with her husband, and drove off, the latter, having run in for something she had forgotten at the last moment, said he should be back to-morrow at latest.

In conjunction with Miss Green, I had gone upstairs to help Mrs. Bedford in anything I could do, and having left my own shawl in her room when I came down to see her off, I returned, after her departure, to fetch it. I could not find it, but feeling sure of having had it on, I began searching for it. It was strange, indeed! Either Mrs. Bedford must have taken it by mistake in the hurry; or, perhaps, it had fallen behind the large box, on which I fancied I remembered placing it. I inferred the latter, and set to work to move what I expected to be very weighty. I laid hold of the lid, and in doing so drew it up. To my astonishment the trunk was empty. My shawl was not there; nothing but a scrap of paper, screwed up, laid behind the box. Curiosity, prompted me to pick it up and open it. On it was written, in pencil, "Prepared to receive you 7.10 train, Friday." The en-

counter in the Grove the preceding Saturday flashed across my mind. What could it mean? Mrs. Bedford had knelt at the box as she gave forth the things for Miss Green to put in the bag, apparently making a selection. Why was it now empty? I turned to look round the room. A brush or two on the dressing-table, a few litters, papers, and an old morning-dress hanging on the door, were all the property left behind. Still, it was no business of mine. Doubtless Mrs. Green was satisfied with her lodgers, and it was not my place to interfere. The captain was to return the next day; but still the empty trunk and the slip of paper haunted me. My shawl, too, and the sovereign she had borrowed! Should I ever see them again?

Later in the evening, about eight o'clock, Mr. Raven dropped in. He was astonished to find his friends gone, and concurred with us in thinking it a great risk for Mrs. Bedford with such a cold. He said he believed she was a very devoted sister, and, moreover, he knew when a woman was determined it was useless to try and stop her. The next day passed, but Captain Bedford did not make his appearance. Mrs. Green suggested that as they were gone into the country, he had probably been induced to remain over the Sunday. Monday came, but he did not return; Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, but not a line either from the captain or his wife. At last even kind old Mrs. Green grew suspicious. I inquired if any address had been left? None. I ventured to ask, hesitatingly, had they paid in advance? (I had volunteered to do so myself.) "No," Mrs. Green said; "she had not liked to ask them for money. She had been at considerable expense in outlay when they came, and had thought they would be sure to settle accounts at the end of the month. But of course it was all right; Mrs. Bedford's travelling-box was upstairs, and she must either return or send for it. I then felt bound to relate that accidentally I had discovered it was empty. Poor Mrs. Green! I shall never forget the blank expression of countenance exhibited as I made my communication, and after satisfying herself that my statement was correct, she told me that with the wine, &c., that she had furnished the Bedfords, they were £14 in her debt. What should she do? She appealed to me for advice—what could I say? I suggested that if she heard nothing for another week, she had better consult Mr. Raven. After all he had introduced them, and probably knew their whereabouts. We had not seen that gentleman since the evening the Bedfords left us, when he had told us he was going out of town for a ten days' visit to Sir David Brewster, to meet some interesting scientific and literary characters, who were to assemble to discuss some new discovery in geology.

In the meantime our party was augmented by a visit from a

son of Mrs. Green's, with his daughter a bright, impulsive girl of eighteen. The father was a good-natured man, about fifty years of age, but with a restlessness of disposition which his sister told me had been his bane through life. He never would settle to anything long together. She added that he was a great favourite in society, always having some new hobby on the *tapis*, which led him into expenses he really could not afford. I afterward learnt what Mrs. Green had kept back—that he was a regular *mauvais sujet*, and that his poor mother and sister had been impoverished by his extravagance. Mr. Samuel Green did not remain many days, but left his daughter with her grandmother for a visit.

All this time there was no news of the Bedfords. At last Mr. Raven returned to town, and, to see Miss Green, his first visit was to us. This lady's pleasure at seeing him was not disguised; in fact, I could see she had lately appropriated his attentions, which had been, perhaps, a little demonstrative; but then Mr. Raven was one of those men who evidently hold the whole sex in respectful deference, understanding the application of a thousand little soft nothings, which, in word and deed, go so far to make what is termed a "lady's man." On his inquiring for the Bedfords, and asking how long they had been returned, Mrs. Green apprised him of their extraordinary conduct, stating she had not only heard nothing of them since they left, but that, also, their account with her was not settled; nor did she forget to mention the circumstance of the empty box.

Never, apparently, was any one more surprised or indignant than Mr. Raven. "He could not," he said, "account for it; he had heard nothing of them." And then it came out that though he had been on the most friendly terms with them, he had only made their acquaintance that season; but never having had any cause of distrust, he had taken it for granted they were people of good fortune. "But what is to be done, Mr. Raven?" asked poor Mrs. Green. "I need not tell you I cannot afford to lose the money." "No, indeed, Mrs. Green; and you cannot, for a moment, suppose I shall permit you to be the sufferer. Since Captain and Mrs. Bedford came to you through my introduction, you must allow me to take the debt upon myself, and I will adjust it at once." So saying, he opened his purse. "How unfortunate!" he said; "I have but a single five-pound note. Will you let me leave that as a first instalment? I really feel so annoyed! I hope the subject will never be mentioned again; for though I can hardly think but that you will hear soon, yet anyone who could call himself a gentleman, and be able to treat a lady in such a fashion, can be no longer an acquaintance of mine."

Mrs. Green's admiration of Mr. Raven's generosity was unbounded. Before leaving at night, he requested a few minutes' conversation alone with Mrs. Green. The interview lasted but a quarter of an hour. We heard the hall-door shut, and then Mrs. Green returned, her face radiant. There never was such a charming, delightful, gentlemanly fellow as Mr. Raven! Independently of taking upon himself the Bedfords' debt, he had just requested the privilege of occupying their vacant room, on very remunerative terms. "The fact," she said, "was, that he had confided to her that he wanted to be, for a time, *incog*. He was about to complete a new work, from some notes he had had entrusted to him, and he must go where his friends could not intrude on him at all hours of the day. He had never felt so at home with any family. Miss Green's sound good-sense, Miss Linley's latent literary talents, Mrs. Green's motherly kindness, had all so won on him, that if he could only persuade the latter to take pity on him, and let him be as a son of the family, he should consider himself a most fortunate man."

We all went to bed that night elated at the idea of Mr. Raven's intentions; each, perhaps, in her heart of hearts, flattering herself that there might be some slight attraction in herself. At any rate, his well-adjusted flattery had taken the effect it often does, and is intended to do, on the female mind, and we were all prepared to make ourselves as agreeable as possible to the new-comer. The next day brought a cab containing Mr. Raven and his portmanteau, and he stepped into his place, coming among us as though he were indeed a son of the house; sitting at the bottom of the table at meals, and taking upon himself all the little arrangements which generally devolve on the master of the establishment. Fanny Green, the grand-daughter, he at first treated as a mere child, calling her "my dear," and "my child." This somewhat affronted the young lady, who, by nature a flirt, determined to show him her childhood days were over, which elicited many a rebuke from her aunt at her forward manner with Mr. Raven. But Fanny was a spoilt girl, and in no mind to be lectured by her aunt, whom she pertly accused of setting her cap at Mr. Raven, and being jealous of her. Miss Green was indignant, and read her niece a lecture. Such ideas, she said, were absurd, and such nonsense must be put a stop to at once. It would never do to entertain such a thought, even in joke, for if Mr. Raven heard a whisper of such an absurdity, they should lose their lodger; so, if Fanny did not behave better, she must be sent home.

Now, in reality, poor Fanny, as I discovered, had nowhere to go. Her father was in fresh difficulties, and when he came to his mother's house, it was generally to endeavour to secure some pecuniary aid, which the poor old lady could not give without deny-

ing herself and daughter many comforts. This even did not satisfy him, and I was once present at a stormy scene, when he declared, if she could not satisfy his demands, he must borrow of her friend, Mr. Raven. At this Miss Green's anxiety was intense, and her secret thoughts were forced from her by her brother's behaviour. "Was it not enough," she said, "that he had impoverished them all his life? Must he now come and upset all her prospects, and expose their poverty to their friends? There was no knowing, if things were left to take their course, but that the fortunes of the family might change," and she hinted I had seen the attentions she had received. At this juncture of affairs I left the room, feeling the subject too delicate a one for any reference to myself, and sincerely pitying poor Miss Green. For, as to attentions, Mr. Raven's were universal, though for the last few days, if I had noticed anything, it was that there had been something more than badinage between our hero and Fanny. Once I had disturbed them by entering the drawing-room suddenly, when they were sitting on the sofa, and he seemed to withdraw his arm from round her waist. After Miss Green's observation, therefore, I deemed it would be kind to give her a hint of what I had witnessed, and the suspicions that had been awakened, that her own dignity might not be compromised. I therefore took an early opportunity of doing so. Miss Green accepted the initiative in a spirit of kindness. She was evidently much disappointed, but from that time determined to subdue her own hopes, and secure the literary lion for her niece.

Another fortnight confirmed my suspicions: Mr. Raven proposed for the young lady. Mrs. Green's consent was formally asked, though Fanny had given hers beforehand. The old lady was delighted, and immediately wrote to her son. "It was, indeed," she said, "a subject of congratulation that dear Fanny's future should be provided for; especially under the unfortunate position of her father, though, of course, it was most desirable not to give a hint of Mr. Green's difficulties to his future son-in-law." I was looked upon quite as one of themselves, and consulted in all these family matters. If Mr. Raven had made himself agreeable before, he now fully entered on his new preferment. With ten-fold desire to please, at once an assiduous lover to Fanny, a devoted son to Mrs. Green, a brother to her daughter, and a would-be friend to myself no trouble seemed too much to take for each and all; whilst his accepted position entailed much attendance on his lady-love, who was very exacting. I feared his literary labours must necessarily suffer, and one day hinted as much. He replied, "that he burned the midnight oil to compensate for the innocent relaxation he was now giving himself." He was very anxious dear Fanny should cultivate a taste for reading. She was never tired of listening to

his quotations from Byron, Shakspeare, and others, but she wished also naturally to become acquainted with her lover's own works, and he undertook to give readings from "Adam Bede" of an evening if we liked him to do so. Mr. Raven had a good voice and read well, and we therefore all enjoyed it, thus making a better acquaintance with Mrs. Poyser, and the other personages in the tale. "How did you think of such characters, Charles?" asked Mrs. Green, for Mr. Raven had insisted on our calling him by his Christian name. He replied—"Oh! I met the old lady up in the north," and then he entertained us with more of Mrs. Poyser's original sayings, which he said he was keeping *in petto* for another work. After breakfast, I frequently found the lovers together, Mr. Raven sitting on a low stool at Fanny's feet, reading the "Mill on the Floss," while the former, flushed and excited at the tale, sat entranced. Poor girl! she was deeply in love, and looked forward to her future lot as Charles Raven's wife with unbounded delight.

I must here own that my preconceived ideas of an author's utter disregard to the material things of earth were undergoing a slight change. No man, it is said, is a hero to his own *valet de chambre*, and I suppose it was the same principle that brought down my lofty conceptions. I could not quite reconcile the fact of an intellectual and capacious mind, one that could grasp such original and romantic ideas as are revealed in the works of George Eliot condescending to take part in the minute details of domestic life, even occasionally aiding in the performance of some of what might be termed the almost menial services of a household. Yet all this Mr. Raven did. Now that he was one of the family he begged to be permitted to lighten his good mother's housekeeping labours. He wished Fanny to be cognisant of domestic matters, to know how to cook and keep house. No woman's education was complete without such knowledge. It was there the German ladies surpassed us, and though he hoped his dear Fanny's position would place her above the practical need of such requirements, yet all knowledge was gain, and a lady could always better manage her household if she knew how things ought to be done. "So far so good;" and as wherever Fanny was she was the magnet that attracted her lover, Mr. Raven soon became as much at home in the kitchen as in the parlour, and knew beforehand what was coming to table. He would even lend a hand in the manufactory of the dishes or their garnishment, and on more than one occasion, when we had company to lunch, and dinner was consequently delayed because our maid-of-all-work had not time to wash up the plates and knives, our stock not being large, he actually condescended to clean the latter; or he would often assist to lay the cloth. If Miss

Green remonstrated he would good-naturedly reply—"He felt such a pleasure in being useful." Often, too, Mr. Raven volunteered to go to market; but early-morning and after dark were his favourite times for these expeditions.

Once again I asked him if such commonplace occupations did not interfere with the chain of his literary ideas, and plan of plot; but I only received for reply:—"Dear Miss Linley, only by personal contact with human nature in all its varied forms, can an author gain experimental knowledge of life. You often wonder, you say, how I pourtray character. I never lose an opportunity of studying it; this morning even I secured a sketch at Billingsgate, when buying fish, which more than repaid my journey there. Perhaps some day you will recognise the description of the fish we are to dine off in company with its buyer and seller."

All this time my promised introduction to Sir Bulwer Lytton had never come off. When I had hinted at the promise, I was on one occasion informed that Sir Bulwer had recently lost a near relative. At another time he was indisposed; but he, Mr. Raven, had mentioned me to him and he was quite interested in what he had heard of me.

DE PROFUNDIS

A CHRISTMAS REVERIE

WHILST I, a lonesome kind o' man,
 Wie'in my chimney-carner zit,
 No vrien'd or dog do bide wie' me,
 Zo I be vorced to think a bit.

The bells ring in the wuld church-tower,
 The lime-trees shiver in the blast;
 But, oh! the aching sense o' loss
 That haunts me as I scan the past!

Last year it wur a cheerful tone
 The bells rang out zo zharp and clear;
 But now my bonnie Jean is dead,
 My child is gone, and I be here.

Her pattens stand beneath the clock,
 No more they echo on the stoane;
 Oh! God, I pray for patience still,
 But I be left here all aloane!

She wur a spracker zoul than I,
 And well I mind her lissome look
 As she my letters taught o' nights—
 And now her gravestone is my book.

And looking in the churchyard now,
 The letters "zaced" I can zee;
 'Tis whoaly ground wherein she lies—
 God knows how zaced 'tis to me.

A cradle stands right auverhead,
 And there a mouse ha' built her nest;
 For thoaghts of him that's gone to her,
 I never could thick mouse molest.

The sparrows twitter in the porch,
 And yett the crumbs she used to gi'e;
 I hear the parson read in church—
 Better than many such are ye.

He tâks o' heaven and happy zouls—
 And we ha' zouls I doan't deny—
 But sparrows scease be varden's-wuths,
 And they be happier than I.

The bells clang in the wuld church-tower,
The yew-tree spreads her branches wide;
Her aged limbs will vall at last—
Lord, how much longer must I bide?

I treasure every word o' her
Beneath that tree who takes her rest;
“God's will be done,” she often zaid,
“Bide patient, Jem, and do thy best.”

Patience!—the lesson's hard to learn;
Christ taught it, and she practised it;
The wind ha' kind o' ztole her voice—
“Be patient, Jem, and bide a bit.”

To-morrow brings another year,
God's plans surpass all human wit;
I thank thee, Lord, for they sweet words,
“Be patient, Jem, and bide a bit.”

Oh! gi'e me strength to do Thy will,
To vollow her as best I can;
But she's a saint in glory now,
And I'm a lonesome zort o' man.

R. C.



WAVERNEY COURT

CHAPTER XX.

THE PIC-NIC.

TIME flies quickly. To-day will soon be yesterday. As we speak our breath is scarcely cold ere we look upon the words we have uttered as something pertaining to the past. A pleasant luncheon will speedily reach its end. A pleasant party appears to the memory in the retrospect like a landscape. As we recede from the latter in distance, as from the former in time, though the whole in its unity may have become concentrated in its beauty, we perceive less of the merits. Many things, which observed closely appear important are lost altogether when viewed remotely. Only a few prominent and more important of the objects stand boldly out.

Thus it was with the pic-nic in question. That agreeable lunch under the shadow of the old oak lasted its time—that is, until the champagne deadened, and the sensation of repletion from fowl and ham and so forth caused our friends to recollect that it was time to quit their leafy shade—and then, like all things else, it ended. And though there appeared so very much done irrespectively, of course, of the eating and drinking—I mean in the talking; and though, to judge from the laughter, the wit must have been as sparkling as the wine; yet, in accordance with the simile with which I have compared it, all that wit seems stale and flat to the historian, and of all the loquacity of the party there appears but little that is sufficiently interesting to the reader for me to record. It can be of little moment that, through some unaccountable want of foresight, and to Mrs. Evelyn's dire distress, that useful article—a corkscrew—had not been brought; nor that to compensate for this mishap the gentlemen tried to extricate the corks by means of pocket-handkerchiefs, but all in vain. Nor can it signify that at the mo-

ment when the consternation was at its height, George Wetherby produced a tremendous pocket-knife with I won't pretend to tell how many blades, and that happily amongst them was found a corkscrew, the thing itself. It is, perhaps, proper for me to remark that a wasp came buzzing into the face of Mrs. Barber's unmarried sister, thereby terrifying that lady into hysterics, and driving her forth-with into the arms of the nervous little curate for protection and comfort. It is of course essential I should mention this, inasmuch as no novel now-a-days is complete without a pic-nic, and no pic-nic complete without a wasp.

I will not, however, disturb myself to recapitulate a little wrangling which occurred quietly, and in the most amicable way, between Mrs. Barber and Mrs. Phillips, her friend, whereof the subject was nothing in particular, but of which all things in general found a part. Nor, anxious as I am for the elevation of my species, will I more than insinuate that Mr. Evelyn, exhilarated by the boisterous mirth of that good company, had suffered himself to take one glass of Moselle more than discretion warranted. I will say no more.

Perhaps, however, it is important to remark that Sir Walter Lee contrived during the whole of the repast to keep near Miss Grace Evelyn, and to whisper a great many things into the ear of that young lady I should certainly never think of revealing this to anybody but the reader, who knows so much of such things already, and who is likely—I can promise him—to know so much more before this story is ended, that I should not be squeamish about discovering to him any secrets, however tender, provided always they were likely to prove interesting. But these little “soft nothings,” breathed, a word here and a word there, though, doubtless, sufficiently interesting to her who heard them, were literally “nothings” to anybody else, except indeed to him who uttered them.

The chief and principal reason I have for deeming it important to remark that Sir Walter Lee kept near Miss Evelyn during lunch, is simply this—that it served very fairly as an excuse for him to keep near her also *after* lunch, when the company separated into twos and threes—generally into twos, and naturally so, when they were young, and of a different sex—to gather nuts or blackberries; to talk scandal, politics, literature, or love.

Have I not had occasion to observe that Mr. Barber was a builder, and that Mr. Phillips, his friend, was an architect? There is, of course, a sort of concatenation between these professions which, as the reader will comprehend, was productive of a similarity in tastes and ideas. And when gentlemen or ladies have similar tastes and ideas, will they not talk? Do they not cleave unto each other? Assuredly. One mamma prefers to talk to another mamma about

their respective pets. A Whig will stick to a Whig ; and a Tory to a Tory, no doubt. There were no tastes in common between Mr. Phillips and his wife ; or between Mr. Barber and his wife. But as Mrs. Barber and her dear friend had a natural taste for scandal and quarrelling, so had the two husbands *their* tastes. They sought, therefore, their own society, and finding consolation in themselves, formed *one* pair.

“The new hotel I am designing for the Demerara Hotel Company,” said the architect, pompously, as he marched away, his friend upon his arm, “is to be constructed by ——”

The remainder of the sentence appeared to the rest of the company but an unintelligible jargon about “frieze” and “scrolls,” and “Sir Morton Petos,” and “capitals,” “columns,” “contracts,” “porticoes,” “coronas,” and “modillions ;” and Mr. Barber vowing very energetically that “it was unquestionably, sir, a very capital thing—a capital thing !” Which no doubt it was, though no pun was meant ; but not sufficiently interesting to be recorded here ; so I let them go their way in peace.

The two “wives of the above” formed another pair. These two amiable ladies began their afternoon’s pleasure with an agreeable contest of “dear friendliness,” in which it was the object of Mrs. Phillips to disparage Grace Evelyn, and that of Mrs. Barber to say unpleasant things in respect of “darling Clara,” in the most affectionate and loving way in the world.

“How attentive Sir Walter is to Grace Evelyn ! Lor’, dear, I shouldn’t wonder if they make a match of it, after all,” said Mrs. Barber, gently, knowing full well that every word she uttered was as a sharp-pointed dagger in her dear friend’s side.

Mrs. Phillips tossed her head, scornfully.

“I wouldn’t be so forward with him, if I were Grace Evelyn,” she said.

“It is a great pity, I must say, dear,” added her dear friend ; “because the girl is certainly very pretty, and I used to like her so.”

Mrs. Phillips again tossed her head, and said something about a “forward thing.”

Mrs. Barber smiled sweetly, and, changing her tactics, began a new attack.

“Darling Clara, dear, seems also to have a very attentive beau.”

Mamma was for a moment appeased, and smiled with pride.

“What, Mr. Wetherby, you mean ?”

“Can you ask, dear ?” replied Mrs. Barber, good-humouredly.

“But what is he, do you know ?”

“Oh, he is a barrister in Fig-tree Court, in the Temple,” re-

plied the other, with great volubility, and added, confidentially, "I hear he has two or three hundred a-year of his own, and ——"

"Ahem!"

Mamma looked up at her dear friend uneasily.

"He is a nephew of Mr. Evelyn, so he must be respectable," she continued, with hesitation.

"There can be no doubt of that, dear," replied Mrs. Barber, slowly, and in a manner which implied that she had great doubt of it. "And—he, he, he!—they seem to have plenty to say to each other, don't they? But really," she added, dropping her voice to a warning whisper, "there are so many parvenus prowling about society now, that—ahem!—you know what I mean, dear; young girls really cannot be too cautious, upon my word!"

But look you, gentle reader, we will suffer these two amiable ladies to go their ways, also. Let us hope they may find plenty of blackberries and wood-nuts, and that they may eat them and enjoy them. People can't very well talk while they are eating, and it is a good thing that some charming ladies' conversation should be curtailed at any price.

Meanwhile, it is easy to have perceived, from certain passages in the foregoing dialogue, that darling Clara had paired off with no other than Mr. Wetherby, and they had departed upon their wanderings, the gentleman paying some most tremendous compliments to the young lady, who, for her part, had a power of rattling on, in a conversation about nothing, which even rather astonished the phlegmatic Wetherby, and caused him once or twice to open very wide his eyes, and regard his fair companion with lazy wonder.

Lieutenant Dent rambled off, nobody knows whither, with Miss Flora Phillips leaning buoyantly upon his arm. I won't recapitulate their conversation for various reasons. The lieutenant laughed and chatted, and romped with Miss, in a manner that won upon her gushing nature incredibly. He quoted Byron sometimes, but this she didn't understand, and vowed she hated poetry, unless it was of the funny kind. But, goodness gracious, how she did devour the blackberries!

For the want of a better companion, the unmarried sister of Mrs. Barber managed to put up very well with the blushing young curate of Waverney, with whom, she being of a religious turn of mind in the Dissenting interest, she discussed various questions of theology, including the Chinese and Malayan missions, for which the Reverend Gideon was so industriously collecting funds. Under the refreshing shade of a grove of chesnut-trees, and deep in the solitude whither they had wandered, these two sat down. There, at the earnest request of the lady, her youthful swain,

'midst many blushes of humility, produced his tuneful flute, and poured forth upon the zephyr a gentle tootle-too, which soon diverged into a sacred strain of psalmody.

Whether it was that owing to the extra glass of Moselle which I have hinted the rector had indulged in, and that Mrs. Evelyn was of opinion her joyous lord was better in her company, or whether that lady really preferred to have her husband by her side, I know not; but this I know, these two marched off arm entwined in arm, the rector flourishing his walking-stick as though he rather expected an enemy to lurk hidden in the bushes round about.

Master Phillips, who had no young lady present with whom to link his fate, and, like most young gentlemen, not caring much for the society of his sisters, made a third with the rector and his wife. When it is stated there was no young lady suitable to Master Phillips, it must not be inferred the writer has overlooked his heroine, the charming Grace. The reason Master Phillips could not pay his attentions to her was simply this: neither he nor anybody else of the company, except Sir Walter Lee, had the remotest notion as to where that lady was, the fact being that she was with Sir Walter Lee himself.

When the party had broken into fragments, that young man—his face alternating between scarlet and white—had invited Grace to accompany him in a ramble.

"Shall we walk down by the side of the river?" he said.

"If you please, Sir Walter," Grace had replied.

So they walked down by the side of the river.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHICH IS RATHER ROMANTIC.

DOWN amidst the wild flowers, the thorn, and the bramble, under the clustering bushes that grew by the side of the river, here rambled Grace and her companion. Screened by the woody canopy of foliage, and cool in the shade of its verdure, they admired the dancing sunlight flitting over the waters, and bade defiance to the hot afternoon glare. The views from the island were pretty. On a projecting neck of land was a quaint little ruin. It had once been a castle, it was now but the home of the seagulls, who dwelt in the ivy which for ages had clambered its walls. Far over the river loomed the pier of Southend, with its flag-staff, and the flag fluttering lazily sometimes when caught by the breeze. At the back of the pier you could distinguish Cliftown, with its neat little villas encircling the bay, and its chalky acclivity gleaming white in the sunshine, and seeming in the distance to be merely a ridge.

Scattered about here and there over the face of the river ships were wending inwards and outwards, the sails dotting the water like sparkles of silver. Far off out at sea, on the line of the horizon, a steamer was speeding; it could be seen by the black cloud of smoke which discoloured the sky; half-a-dozen vessels, also speckling the horizon, were bending their way towards the sea.

"This is a lovely spot!" exclaimed Grace Evelyn, with enthusiasm, as she and Sir Walter Lee, having walked partially round the island from the south side of it, where they had lunched, were now contemplating from the north the scene I have attempted to describe.

"Strange that people should go a thousand miles to behold scenery, while such a landscape as this, and such a stately old river as the Thames, would be despised——"

"Despised because it is at home, and easy of access. Who would care for the Alps if they were as easy to climb as the beautiful hills which encircle in a violet belt our own quiet Waverney?"

"No one. I have been to many lands," continued Lee, catching the girl's enthusiasm, "but in none of them is there more real and varied beauty than in England."

"And yet, Sir Walter, you were talking, only the other evening, of leaving it," returned Grace, with an arch smile.

Her companion's face flushed crimson.

"I am not such a fool, Miss Evelyn, as I am afraid you must have thought me," he replied, with a light laugh; "and so, as I have already informed you, I have now changed my mind. I wanted to speak to you of that evening; but, really, I am conscious I made such an ass of myself that I did not know how to begin."

"Indeed!"

"Do you remember the whole of our conversation, as well as that portion of it to which you have alluded?"

Grace cast down her eyes and blushed, and then sought to conceal her confusion with a light laugh.

"Some of it I remember; and I must confess—you will excuse me, Sir Walter, for saying so—I thought it certainly very droll!"

"Did you find nothing but drollery, Grace, in what I said?"

"A portion of it was rather—rather tragic, I admit."

"You must, indeed, have thought me a prodigious block-head!"

"So you remarked the other morning, Sir Walter, and I——"

"And you——"

"Did not deny that I thought you] crazy, or, at least, perfectly unaccountable. I thought that part of your behaviour particularly eccentric when you so strongly expressed your determination to leave Waverney in such an insane manner as you did; and

I certainly did not think you the less so when, the day but one following, despite your asseverations, you were back again at Waverney Court!"

"One would almost think you would rather I had stayed away."

The young man contrived to take her hand, and as he spoke looked earnestly into her eyes, as though he waited for her answer. The girl instantly, but gently, disengaged her hand, and laughed merrily in his face. And if Grace looked prettier and more provoking at one time than another, it was when she laughed. Nevertheless, she could not help thinking—as, indeed, she had often thought before—that Sir Walter had really fine eyes.

"Tell me, Grace," added Lee, urgently, "would you sooner I had not come back?"

"Sooner you had not come back, Sir Walter? Really it is a curious question. No; at least, not since you appear to be in so much better spirits, and not quite so incomprehensible as when you went away." At which Grace laughed again more heartily than ever.

"I was anxious to have a little talk with you, Miss Evelyn," said Lee, "in order that I might explain to you what must, indeed, have seemed very strange and ridiculous in my conduct. I was about to do so the other morning, when the entrance of your mamma prevented me. Since then, though I have diligently sought an opportunity of speaking to you privately, I have not before been able to converse with you alone."

"Very well, sir; you can go on," returned the girl, demurely. "Perhaps, however, you had better begin by apologising for the manner in which you shook my nerves; they are not made of iron, sir,—but even iron will not stand such sudden changes from hot to cold as that to which you subjected them the other evening, in your charming alternations of gushing enthusiasm and frenzied despair!"

"I am very grieved to have caused you any unpleasant feeling, Grace," replied Lee, earnestly; "if I have done so, I do indeed hope you will believe such was furthest from my wish."

Miss Evelyn laughed good-humouredly, and pretended to be examining the manufacture of her parasol. Nevertheless, her heart was beating more violently than she would have cared to let Sir Walter know.

"I will believe anything you please, sir," she said; "and so I will endeavour to forget all about it; though being alone with you in this sequestered part of the island, and after your late phrenzy, makes me rather fearful of a relapse!"

Scarcely had the words passed her lips ere she blushed up to the

eyes in confusion, lest she had been speaking too boldly, and for fear Sir Walter should think this was a somewhat broad hint for him to renew his declaration of love.

Lee was, however, far too confused himself to notice her confusion.

"There is one part, my dear girl, I wish you *not* to forget," he exclaimed, in a voice trembling with emotion, and again gently taking her hand.

"And what is that, may I venture to ask?" answered Grace, in a voice scarcely less tremulous than his own, though she tried to conceal it by her off-hand tone.

"That part, dear Grace, when I told you how I loved you!"

He felt the little hand very distinctly tremble in his great one. The girl was indeed so agitated she could not speak.

"You have most likely heard, Grace—in fact my fame has been sure to have preceded me, since there are always plenty of immaculate people who are ready to paint the devil a little blacker than he is—you have most likely been told that I am a spendthrift, a gay villain, a rogue, a parvenu—everything, in fact, that an honest girl should avoid and abhor."

The girl glanced furtively at his excited face with abject terror.

"No, no; I have never heard you spoken of thus!"

"Well, perhaps I have exaggerated somewhat. You have heard, at least, that before my uncle's death I have been a gay and dissolute young man;—come, now, have you not?"

Grace was silent, and hung her head.

"You need not answer; I thought so," continued Lee, with bitterness. "Well, never mind; to some extent I deserve such opprobrium. I am afraid—nay, I will be candid—I know I have been such. *This*, my dear girl, was what I meant when, in my passionate expression of love to you, I told you the other evening I was a guilty wretch—the more so, my dear girl, as I had ventured to love such a pure and noble being as yourself. For *this*, Grace, there is an excuse—I could not help loving you. To see you, was to love you. I know I am unworthy of you; but I—I am not so unworthy of you *now* as I thought I was *then*."

He regarded her fixedly as he ceased speaking, and paused to witness the effect his words had made.

"I do not see how *that* can be!"

"That I am anxious to explain."

"Proceed, then, Sir Walter, if you please; you have been enigmatical hitherto."

"I wish to clear myself in your opinion, Grace; and I am sure I shall not suffer in it more by telling you the truth."

"Candidly, Sir Walter, I *do* prefer the truth to falsehood."

"All my strange behaviour, which, perhaps, I have displayed

towards you upon several occasions lately, may appear no longer so when I explain to you. Grace, that for some time past a very heavy bet which might have ruined me, and which I was foolish enough to make, has been pending over my head. The afternoon before I spoke to you more plainly than I have ever spoken to you before I heard that the horse which I had backed had suffered an accident; and that consequently in a few hours I might be as poor, and even poorer, than when I was simply a penniless scamp roving about town, or hiding my head abroad."

"Is *this* what you meant?" demanded the girl quickly, and feeling a weight moved from her heart at the explanation. "These things are foolish and imprudent, but not criminal. I am thankful, Sir Walter, for your sake, that it is no worse, as I confess your manner led me to believe."

"This is indeed all," cried Lee, hastily; but his eyes fell before her searching glance, and, as he continued, he kept his face turned from her. "I felt how criminal I should have been even to contemplate bringing my ruin upon you; I am unworthy of you even now. But what is written in the records of the past may, perhaps, be erased in the scroll of the future. Who can lead a wretch like me into the paths of honour if it be not a woman, innocent and pure as you? Bear witness the ardour with which I loved you. The words I uttered were the language of my soul. I told you that I loved, yet I *feared* to ask you to marry me, because I loved you so well. My destiny has since been revealed to me in a truer light. Distracted, too, with the fear of ruin, I said I *dared* not marry you. From that fear I am now exempt, dear, and I ask you, I implore you to accept my heart, my hand, my fortune, which will in such a heedless danger be imperilled no more. Be my guardian angel, Grace; without you life is misery. Bless it, and make me happy, my own dear girl; even as I will strive to make you happy."

"And is this really *all* that you meant, when you called yourself infamous; and when you said that you dare not——"

"That I dare not marry you, dear?" he interrupted, tenderly.

Then he drew his tall and noble form up to its full height. His eye flashed scorn, his lip curled with a bitter smile, and he raised his right hand aloft as if in defiance. In his beauty he looked like the fiend in Milton's sublime poem, setting the powers of heaven at nought. "Yes, Grace," he cried in a loud voice. "But I *dare* do it now! By heaven, for *you*, Grace, I dare, I will dare all things—my love, my soul, my bride!" He sank upon his knees at her feet, and passionately kissed her hands. "Speak to me, Grace; speak to me one little word! Say that you will be my wife!"

Overcome by her confusion, and blushing like the rose, the girl murmured something that was almost inaudible; but its import was plain to him.

With a loud cry he sprang to his feet, and caught her in his arms.

"My own," he cried, "my own for ever!"

At this moment a sound from the bushy copse behind them caused the two to start in alarm. They looked at each other in dismay.

"Did you hear anything, Grace?" said Lee, in a whisper.

"I—I thought I heard a groan."

CHAPTER XXII.

TREATS OF THE "SENSATIONAL."

How it was that Lieutenant Dent was in that part of the island at that juncture, and how it was he came to groan so propitiously, it is the province of the present chapter to tell.

It has been mentioned that Mr. George Wetherby departed on a tour of exploration, in company with Miss Clara Phillips, and that the lieutenant went elsewhere with the gushing Miss Flora. Now, it happened, as such things may and will happen, when the island is small, that the exploration expeditions ran foul of each other, and that Wetherby and his lady encountered, firstly, Dent and his lady; and that these four, having amalgamated themselves into one party, came across Mrs. Phillips and her dear friend, who were followed, a little in arrear, by Mr. Evelyn and his party. It happened also that the ladies, feeling rather tired, prepared to sit down and rest themselves a little while in the protecting shade of an alcove which had been roughly hewn out of a rock, so as to resemble the simple workmanship of nature; and while the gentler portion of the company, including the Rector, who was as gentle as any of them, thus refreshed themselves, Wetherby and Dent found themselves at liberty to enjoy a stroll by themselves, unfettered by the restraint of female society. Accordingly, linking their arms, the two gentlemen set off together, to the intense disgust of the two Miss Phillips, the eldest of whom affected to treat their bad taste with profound indifference, and the younger did not attempt to disguise her scorn.

Dent and his friend rambled to a part of the little island not far from that which we have already described, and from which Lee and Grace Evelyn were admiring the beauties of the surrounding scene. They, too, loitered a few minutes to expatiate enthusiastic-

ally upon the various scenery, to point out to one another what each thought the prettiest object in the prospect—the heaving sea in the distance, with its rippling waves tossing the vessels of many kinds and nationalities upon its broad bosom; the more placid waters of the Thames stretching wide on either side; the pretty little cockney watering-place of Southend nearly opposite to them, and looking, in the sunshine and the distance, like a fleecy white cloud which tinted the edge of the river with its own silvery hue.

A few words of admiration and criticism upon the scene had passed between the two friends when a little incident occurred which diverted their speculations and conversation into a new channel. A few seagulls, which had strayed so far away from their natural dwelling-places—the rocks and lofty cliffs washed by the ocean—were skimming the waters of the lake made by the promontory, upon which was the ruined tower, and were flying about, or seeking shelter amidst the ivy overclambering the ruined walls. Suddenly a puff of smoke made itself visible out of one of the loopholes in the ruin, and immediately after the report of a fowling-piece sounded with a sharp crack upon the air. The next moment two of the flying birds fell fluttering to the ground.

“A good shot, by Jove!” exclaimed Wetherby, condescending to clap his hands.

“Pretty fair,” returned Dent, coolly; “but shooting birds does not require the same nerve that shooting men does. I wonder if yonder sportsman who has just knocked over those little harmless creatures would have the skill to put a bullet through a moderately-sized Russian head, a slim Cossack’s heart, at six hundred yards, with the comfortable consciousness that any one of a thousand amongst the shaggy-headed and blue-frocked enemy was likely every moment to put one through himself?”

“Could you do it?”

“I *have* done it, *mon ami*; and I have, moreover, known several of our fellows in the Crimea, including Lee, do many more skilful things with their rifle than that.”

Wetherby started, and turned upon his companion abruptly.

“Talking of Lee and the Crimea,” he said, “reminds me, Dent, that you never finished that story you were telling me the other day.”

“What story was that?”

“About that rencontre you had with Lee, when you met him and some mysteriously beautiful daughter of Eve in Regent-street. We were interrupted in the midst of it, you remember.”

“Were we?” replied Dent, evasively. “Ah, to be sure, so we were!”

"*Allons*, then! Take up the thread of thy discourse, thou mighty son of Mars, and continue thy narration from the interesting point at which we had arrived. What was the next startling episode?"

The lieutenant, biting his finger-nails fretfully, turned away his face.

"No episode at all," he replied.

"The *point*, then. You don't mean to tell me you are so insufferably dull as to have been relating to me an anecdote without either incident or point?"

"Psha! my dear fellow; I almost forget what it was I was going to tell you. It was, in fact, nothing—nothing worth repeating, upon my word. 'Twas a mere strategy to while away the time."

"Give it to us, my boy, nevertheless," rejoined George, languidly. "The same excuse will serve now as then."

Dent, however, did not reply, but stared moodily upon the ground.

"Zounds, man!" cried Wetherby, striking a lucifer upon his boot, and then setting light to his cigar. "Man, make haste, or we shall be interrupted again! There seems a destiny almost against my hearing this precious story of yours about Sir Walter Lee."

"The fact is, Wetherby, I had no business to have begun that story; it involves a secret which is not my own."

"The deuce! Why on earth did you begin it, then?"

"Had I known I was about to resume acquaintance with Lee, or that your uncle's family were so intimate with him,—in short, if I had been more discreet than I was, I should *not* have begun it. It is a matter—merely a personal matter, I believe—which concerns Lee alone. Forgive me, George; if the secret were my own instead of his, you should be my confidant."

"Gad, no; don't make yourself uneasy on my account," returned Wetherby, with a laugh. "If it's a secret, for goodness sake don't burden me with it; unless, indeed, you and Sir Walter feel disposed to make a professional affair of it, and then, of course, if it relates to a chancery suit or anything of the *genus lex*, I shall, of course, be extremely glad to hold the brief; otherwise, I don't want to meddle with anything mysterious, especially as it appears, my dear fellow, from your manner, to make you, the depository of the same, rather uncomfortable in mind, if I may take the liberty of saying so. Under all circumstances, I think silence is desirable to me and wise in you. Yours is an instance in which you prove an exception to the rule that *le silence est le vertu de ceux qui ne sont pas sages*."

"Nay, but, George, you know what I mean——"

"Perfectly."

"Yet I doubt you are a little vexed with me?"

"Not a bit, my dear fellow," rejoined Wetherby, puffing his cigar vigorously; "not a bit; I don't wish anyone to break confidence with anyone else. So let's change the subject, since it is one which we may not talk upon, and since, as I had before the honour of remarking to this distinguished company, there is a destiny against my hearing it out."

The two gentlemen walked on for a few moments more in silence—a silence which was presently broken by another report of the gun fired from the old ruin, and which was also followed by the fluttering downwards of another wounded bird. Dent was the first to speak this time.

"Talking of destiny," he said, "tell me candidly, George, are you a Necessitarian?—do you believe in the doctrine of Necessity or not?"

"A Necessitarian?" repeated George, puffing his cigar lazily, and contemplating drearily the smoke as it curled upwards in the air in spiral columns. "What the deuce is a Necessitarian? Is it anything to drink? I could believe most heartily in anything that way just now, especially if it was anything like whisky toddy or rum-punch. Necessity!—hum! I believe in *that* most thoroughly when I am hard up; an illustration to the point, my dear sir, which, I regret to state, is of no uncommon occurrence with your humble servant."

Dent met this badinage with a slight gesture of impatience.

"Seriously, though; tell me truly, Wetherby, are you a Fatalist?"

"Well, seriously," replied George, "upon my word, I hardly know whether I am or not. Of course, everything will be that will be. I shall either die to-night or I shall *not* die to-night."

"But this is not the point," rejoined the young soldier, moodily. "The question is, whether one of these two things is decreed to take place *without* the *or*—without any alternative whatever; and that, moreover, it has so been decreed from all eternity?"

"I don't bother my head much about these questions, I must confess."

"It is an important question, however."

"Excuse me, but I don't see its importance myself."

"And one," pursued Dent, not heeding the interruption, "which philosophers have studied and discussed in all ages—the great question of Necessity *versus* Free Will."

"Bosh! Why, bless the man, everyone whose head is not

muddled with metaphysics knows that he is a free agent—I believe that is the term. I know I can step into this river and drown myself, if I am such a fool as to *will* to do so; or I can refrain; and I know that destiny or fate has nothing to do with it.”

“Do you know that, Wetherby? It is true if you step into the river voluntarily you *believe* you are not constrained; that is, you are *conscious* of no constraint. But then, as Hobbs, one of the most original and earliest of English metaphysicians has observed, that neither is the top which spins on its axis conscious of any such constraint. The real doctrine of Necessity is this—that every action of our life is but a *necessary* link, following of course from its predecessors, the first of which is the Great First Cause; that, in short, we are compelled by the laws of our nature to act in accordance with that which our judgment decides is the greatest *mot ve*; and that it is impossible for a rational being to act contrary to that law.”

“Ah, to be sure!” interposed Wetherby, yawning. “All this, my dear boy, may be very true; but if you don’t want to send me to sleep you had better draw it mild, you know. You will pardon my frankness, but really—what does it mean?”

“Simply this. If you step into the river, you do so in obedience to the *motive* which your judgment determines to be the strongest; viz., the desire to live, or the desire to die. Hobbs, Hume, Priestley, and, at the present day, I believe, Mr. John Stuart Mill, have held this doctrine. Dr. Reid and the Scotch philosophers have combatted it with very doubtful success. If it is the true theory, every event that happens is but the necessary sequence of its antecedents, and the present and the future have both been predestined by Providence in the past. Free-will, which we boast of, is but a meaningless name.”

“Is it? Well, for my part,” said Wetherby, with intense gravity; “so far as I am concerned, I admit that it most decidedly is. For if it is *not* a meaningless name, I am sorry to say that its meaning has not become any the clearer to me. My ideas were always rather confused on the subject, and your lucid arguments (excuse me, I admit they are very profound), have only involved my vague notions in additional obscurity. Under which unfavourable circumstances, I beg to move that we talk forthwith of something that the moderate wits of an aspiring, but inexperienced member of the bar, are capable of grappling. Where the deuce a dandified soldier like you has found the time, the means, or the inclination, to muddle his brains with such abominable stuff is a question in ethics which I will leave your precious friends Hobbs, Hume, and Mill, to decide; but—hush!”

The two young men halted suddenly at the gesture of silence made by George. They both listened, and the sound of voices from behind a cluster of trees, near which they were standing, was distinctly audible.

"It is the voice of your cousin, Grace, I think," said Dent.

"*Vraiment!* And that of Sir Walter Lee. Yes, there they are, sure enough. By Jove, he has got his arm round her waist. They seem mighty confidential, upon my word! Dent, I'll wager you what you please I have the honour of being cousin-in-law to a baronet. I feel exalted in my sphere already. *Entre-nous, mon ami, je crois que nous sommes de trop. Eh, bien! Qu'as tu, donc?*"

And he caught his companion by the arm. For Lieutenant Dent was stretching forward towards where Sir Walter Lee and Grace Evelyn were standing. These two were at that interesting point in their conversation recorded in the last chapter, in which Sir Walter was so passionately declaring his love.

"Great heavens!" murmured Dent, deeply agitated; "that it should turn out like this! It is terrible—terrible to think of! God help me!"

His words were unintelligible to Wetherby; but as he spoke, his hands trembled, and his face turned livid.

"Dent! my dear boy!" ejaculated George, regarding him with astonishment, "what the deuce is the matter with you? Have you never witnessed a love-scene before? I'll be bound you have taken a part in a few on your own account, you hypocrite!"

Lieutenant Dent made an effort to recover himself, and so far succeeded as to give a short hysterical laugh.

"Let us come away," he said, hurriedly; *comme vous dites, nous sommes de trop.*"

They turned therefore away; but as they did so the lieutenant could not repress a groan, which rose to his lips irresistibly. This was the groan heard by Sir Walter Lee.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LIEUTENANT DENT.

LIEUTENANT DENT almost dragged his wondering friend from the spot where they were standing. The latter began to pour forth a torrent of questions as to what had so strangely affected the former; and Dent, in the course of a few seconds, had so far recovered his composure as to be able to assume an air of indifference, and to make evasive replies.

"Well, if you won't tell me what is the matter with you," said

Wetherby, shrugging his shoulders, "there, of course, is an end of it."

"Psha! it was nothing," returned Dent, shivering; "I merely felt a little faint and sick. I am sometimes liable to such attacks —"

"No, d—n it, man!" retorted the other, good-humouredly; "it is another of your precious secrets, you can keep it to yourself and welcome. There is no need to go out of the way to invent excuses."

The young lieutenant made a gesture of impatience.

"I tell you it is not another of my precious secrets, as you call them," he said.

"The deuce! Then do you mean to say it is the *same*?"

The response was an indistinct muttering, which sounded like a suppressed imprecation. George looked steadily at him, and laughed outright.

"Ha, ha! like Bassanio, I have thee on the hip there, I guess, my metaphysical son of Mars! Well, well, never mind, old fellow, we won't say anything more about it. If there really is anything that you don't feel disposed to make me your confidant in, I have no wish, my dear fellow, to know anything about it; and—and, in short," he added smiling, "there seems such a multifarious variety of mysteries about this little old-fashioned village of Waverney that I shall be heartily glad to get back into the unromantic seclusion of Fig-tree-court!"

"You must not, however, forget your engagement to accompany me to Coventry," observed Dent, who seemed very willing to change the conversation, and who now spoke in a lighter tone. "I will warrant you no mystification to unsettle your mind there."

"Thanks for the assurance. I shall be quite at your service when we leave here."

The two gentlemen had now got far from that part of the island where they had so unexpectedly come across Sir Walter and Grace.

"I think we had better seek out our friends in their arbour; they will wonder what on earth has become of us. Besides, I want my tea."

"Agreed, with all my heart," replied Dent. "I—I shall be glad to get back, as much as you will."

They repaired to the alcove where they had left Mrs. Barber and the other ladies, but found they were no longer there. They, therefore, retraced their steps to that part of the island where they had lunched, and where it had been agreed they were to meet again at five o'clock for tea. Here they found most of the company already assembled. A tea-kettle was suspended on three sticks, forming a

sort of tripod, and a wood fire was blazing underneath. A clean white cloth was spread upon the grass, with cups and saucers, and edibles of all kinds on it.

"Well, you young fellows," cried the Rector, gaily, "here we all are, ready for tea, and only waiting for you."

"And dear Grace," interposed Mrs. Phillips, with affection.

"And—and Sir Walter Lee," added Mrs. Phillips's dear friend. At which darling Clara scornfully tossed her head.

"The water will soon boil," said Mrs. Evelyn, raking the burning embers together with housewifely skill, and piling up some fresh faggots upon the top. "Oh! dear me, Mrs. Phillips, what a thing it is we should be always eating, and drinking, and washing up. Not but what it is a great blessing to have a good appetite—at least," she added, reflectively, and as a saving clause, "for those who have anything to eat."

"Precisely so, my dear madam—precisely so," replied the slim and pompous architect, smiling affably, and regaling his nostrils with a pinch of snuff; "and I congratulate you"—(sniffs another pinch of snuff off his thumb)—"madam"—(sniff)—"upon the elegant fabrication you have constructed to support the kettle, without—he! he!—calling in the aid of our friend here to erect one."

"Ho! ho!" roared the hearty builder, "or without coming to *your* shop, Phillips, to design one. Ho! ho! ho!"

Which very small joking caused the two gentlemen to rub their hands, and laugh facetiously in the best humour with themselves in the world, until, encountering the severe glances of their respective better-halves, they were uncomfortably impressed with the conviction that they had been saying something rude, or wrong, or that perhaps their hilarity might be by some deemed vulgar. They instantly collapsed accordingly.

"I wonder where those young folks can have got to?" said the Rector, peering about him in every direction, and scratching his chin.

"Oh! don't be uneasy, sir, I don't suppose they are very far from us," returned Mrs. Phillips, trying to look amiable.

"Nor from one another, I'll be bound," added Mrs. Barber, with a slightly compassionate glance at darling Clara, which galled that young lady's mamma to the very quick.

At this juncture the sound of crackling branches was heard, and from the shrubbery behind them Grace and Sir Walter emerged, the latter looking rather pale, the former all blushes and prettiness.

"Bless my heart alive!" cried the Rector, slapping his knee-breeches gleefully, "here we all are at last, then."

"Grace, my dear," said Mrs. Evelyn, dropping a lump of sugar

into a tea-cup with stern severity, "I wonder you should keep us waiting tea!"

"Really, mamma," stammered Grace, blushing, "we didn't know the time."

"Nor yet care, I suspect, eh, cousin?" whispered George in the young lady's ear, which only caused her to blush deeper than ever, and to protest very innocently that she "didn't know what he meant."

"Hulloa! lieutenant, don't be off again; we are just about to begin, as the showmen say at the fair," cried Mr. Evelyn, catching Dent by the arm. For the latter, who had been moodily silent since his return with Wetherby, had risen from the grass upon which he was reposing as soon as Grace and Lee appeared. He was seemingly now about to turn moodily from the company, but being thus apostrophised by Mr. Evelyn, he started as if from a reverie, stammered an apology, and resumed his seat.

The company then took their places at the primitive, but not on that account less agreeable, spread; Sir Walter Lee and Miss Evelyn contriving by some means to sit together; whilst Mr. Wetherby, by way of change, transferred his attentions from the elder Miss Phillips to her gushing and black-eyed sister, to the dire disgust of the former, who thereupon, finding Lieutenant Dent so much absorbed in his own cogitations as to be invulnerable to female charms, was constrained to pay court to the bashful curate, who, for his part, was at that moment explaining some doctrinal difficulty to the enrapt maiden sister of Mrs. Barber, and with such evangelical enthusiasm, that he did not even perceive that rogue George Wetherby abstracting his flute from his coat-tail pocket until he and the rest of the party were startled by a vigorous "tootle-too-too," played by the latter upon the same.

"Our darling Clara seems rather fickle in her views this afternoon," whispered Mrs. Barber, *sotto voce*, in mamma's ear, which thereby to call the latter lady's especial attention to the forlorn and neglected condition of her daughter.

Mamma responded with a sickly smile.

"But Sir Walter seems very stedfast in *his*!" Mrs. Barber added, in the same tone.

The Rector then said "grace," or, as the maiden sister of Mrs. Barber (who, of Dissenting opinions somewhat modified since her acquaintance with the curate of Waverney) termed it, "asked a blessing;" and then the party began their refreshing meal.

Tea over, the company scattered themselves about once more, and rambled till dusk, when they reassembled to return homewards. By half-past seven they were in the carriages, and on their return journey, most being well satisfied with their day's pleasure. To

these, however, there seemed one exception. Lieutenant 'Dent continued silent and moody the whole evening, and earned for himself the title, bestowed on him by Miss Flora Phillips, of "Old Grumps." He seemed distressed mentally, and repulsed with curtness some attempts at raillery on the part of George, who at last, with a shrug of the shoulders and a grimace, was constrained to give him up as a bad job, and devoted himself, to some more amusing companion.

As they approached Waverney, the Phillipses and the Barbers were safely deposited at their respective homes, past which the rest of the party had to go, in order to reach the rectory. As the carriage drew up at the rectory-gate, the old clock in the church tower struck nine.

That evening was to be an epoch in this history.

The Rector jumped to the ground, and the door of the house being opened, the rest followed. As they did so, the female servant took Mrs. Evelyn aside, and whispered a few words to her. Immediately afterwards that lady said something to Sir Walter Lee.

"Some one waiting to see me!" ejaculated the baronet, in surprise.

"He came from the Court, Sir Walter, so Jane says; didn't you say so, Jane?—and has been waiting for you ever since—how long, Jane?"

"Ever since six o'clock, pleas'm," replied Jane, with a curtsy.

"Where is he now? I will see him," said the baronet, hastily.

"He is waiting for you, sir, in the dining-room."

And into the dining-room Sir Walter Lee accordingly went. A thickset man, respectably dressed in black, was sitting there. He rose at the entrance of Sir Walter.

"Well, Giles," said the latter, who recognised his butler, "what do you want with me?"

"Oh, please Sir Walter, Mr. Squelch—hem!—is over at the Court, and is waiting to see you partickler," said Giles, puffing with the weight and warmth of the fat with which nature had endowed his portly person.

"Mr. Squelch?"

"Yes, Sir Walter; he came by the five o'clock down, from London."

"I don't know what the deuce he wants with me, Giles!"

"I think he do want to see you, Sir Walter, and very partickler," replied Giles, insinuatingly, and rubbing his fat, soft hands.

"What makes you think so?"

"Because, Sir Walter—hem!—because he said so," replied Giles, in the same insinuating, apologetical tone.

"The inference is logical, Giles."

"Sir—hem!—I beg your pardon," said Giles, who had but a dim and vague notion of what "logical" meant.

"Did he send any further message?"

"No, Sir Walter—hem!—except that his business was—hem!—private, and very important; and that he'd—hem!—feel obliged, Sir Walter, if you would be kind enough to—hem!—to see him as soon as ever you could make it convenient—hem!"

"And he is waiting for me now?"

"Yes, sir."

Sir Walter took a rapid turn across the room. He looked annoyed at being disturbed. He appeared, however, to have formed a decision.

"Wait one minute, Giles, and I will go back with you and see him."

Hastily returning to the parlour, he stated briefly that he had just received a message that his legal adviser was expecting to see him on some important business, and that he must, therefore, wish them good-night. He was very sorry to leave them—and, indeed, he looked so—but business must be consulted before pleasure, and so forth.

"The deuce it must," muttered Wetherby, "I never found it at all necessary myself!"

Fortunately no one overheard the remark.

"I agree with you, my friend, with all my heart," cried the Rector, as he shook the baronet by the hand, "though I suspect," he added, with a twinkle of the eye, "my nephew here could give you a lesson how pleasure and business could be both combined."

"I will see you to-morrow morning, gentlemen," said Lee, and he wished his friends good-night.

He lingered a moment over the hand of Grace, and gave it a gentle pressure, which sent the warm blood bounding from the young girl's heart into her face.

He entered one of the carriages which was still standing at the door, and Mr. Giles, puffing and blowing, mounted the box. A moment after the carriage rattled away, its occupant impatiently wondering what new revelation was to transpire at Waverney Court.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIRST LINK IN THE CHAIN.

"WHERE is Mr. Squelch?" demanded Sir Walter Lee, as he sprang from the carriage and ran into the hall of Waverney Court.

"Sir, he is waiting for you in the library," was the reply.

To the library the baronet, without further remark, hastened, the door of which was partly open, and through the interstice the faint reflection of a lighted lamp was gleaming. Mr. Squelch was indeed within, seated comfortably enough in Sir Walter's well-stuffed easy chair, and reading a book, of which several were scattered upon the table beside him. On the table, also, was a decanter of wine, with glasses, and an ample supply of cake. So that, on the whole, if the sharp-visaged solicitor had been waiting long, he had, perhaps, no reason to complain.

At the abrupt entrance of Sir Walter, Mr. Squelch had arisen from his chair, his great goblin-looking head peering up behind the top of the lamp on the table, like the wierd form of an Effret, in the "Arabian Nights." Lee shook hands affably with his legal adviser, inquired after his health, and apologised for having kept him waiting.

"Oh, my dear sir," replied Mr. Squelch, turning up his eyes and screwing up his mouth into a smile, and bending forward, and throwing back his head, and lifting his bony fingers, deprecatingly, "Oh, my dear sir, do not apologise, I beg. Your excellent house-keeper has made me very comfortable, I assure you. Indeed, Sir Walter, I have made myself perfectly at home—perfectly at home—I assure you."

"That is right, I am very glad you have," replied Lee, laughing. "What do you think of my library? I suppose you have scarcely ever had such a good opportunity of examining its contents. My uncle was too much of a stay-at-home, I fancy, ever to suffer any guest of his to remain up here in solitude."

The sharp-featured lawyer was beginning to raise his hands again in deprecation, and to say, "Now, my dear Sir Walter——"

"At all events," interrupted Lee, seating himself, "I am very glad, Mr. Squelch, you are sufficiently of a *helluo librorum* to be able to pass your time tolerably with my books, during their master's absence. For my part, I spend a good deal of time now-a-days among them; and, I suppose," he added, with a faint smile, "I am not the only reformed rake that books and intellectual pleasures yield more lasting satisfaction to than those of a baser kind, *hæc studia adolescentium, alunt, senectutem oblectant*,' &c., as Cicero says."

During this exordium the little solicitor listened with rapt attention, bending forward respectfully, opening his eyes and shutting them again with a sharp snap, and showing his fierce-looking teeth in a fashion that might have made a nervous child rather uncomfortable, lest he should happen to be hungry and have a taste for little children.

When Lee ceased, Mr. Squelch seemed to ponder on the words for a moment, to ascertain if there were anything unsound or illegal in them. Then, having satisfied himself his assenting to them would in no wise compromise him, he said, "Of course, my dear sir; of course—precisely so."

Lee poured himself out a glass of wine, and invited his guest to follow his example. He was rather anxious to hear what the latter had to communicate of such importance. But Mr. Squelch, suspecting this, perhaps, and knowing that a man who has a secret does not lose in importance by keeping it a bit, did not seem willing to deviate from his usual routine and phlegmatic manner to reveal it.

"Thank you; thank you, my dear Sir Walter, I have sufficient—more, in fact, than I usually indulge in," he added, with a bland smile. "Hum!" here he threw himself back in the easy chair (which I should have observed he had offered to resign to Lee, but which that gentleman had courteously refused to accept) and stuck his two thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat. "Hum! I was just amusing myself with a volume of the—the Newgate Calendar."

"Indeed," said Lee.

"Very interesting some of these cases are; some of them very interesting, particularly to a legal man."

"I should think it very possible; but I confess they are far too horrible for *me*."

"Horrible, my dear sir? Pooh, pooh! Nothing where you are used to it." And Mr. Squelch rubbed his hands with delight and grinned; and his little grey eyes danced in the light and looked so bright in the glare of the lamp, that you might almost fancy two additional lights were burning inside his skull, and shining through them.

"But I am *not* used to it, thank goodness," returned the baronet, amused by the professional view of the case.

"But you soon *would* be, Sir Walter—you soon would be, if you were a lawyer; and then you'd rather like it than not. I was reading a case of a man (it occurred in 1769 at Tottenham), who had murdered a relative—his uncle, in fact—for his wealth, and had committed bigamy as well. Gad, sir, it wasn't found out for years; but out it all came at last. The case was as clear against

him as the face of day, sir. The chain of circumstantial evidence against him in regard to the first crime was complete; and he afterwards confessed to the latter actually, my dear sir, as he was on the scaffold, with the rope round his neck, sir—with the rope positively round his neck! Very curious case!—wasn't it, eh? Very curious, upon my word. Sir Richard Pounder—Spouting Dick, as he used to be called—was counsel for the Crown. A most extraordinary case, certainly!"

"Shocking!" said Sir Walter in a low tone as his forehead rested upon his hand.

"Very curious case!" the lawyer repeated enthusiastically, as though he considered the word "curious" decidedly more applicable to the case in point than that which the other had bestowed. "And how do you think it all came to be found out?" he added, growing quite warm with the excitement this interesting subject afforded him.

"I—I really cannot possibly think."

"All through a pair of boots, sir, which the fool had neglected to destroy, and which were found to have a sprinkling of the murdered man's blood upon the uppers, sir. It is remarkable how all these things are sure to come out at last; and when —— I really beg your pardon, Sir Walter, but that reminds me ——"

Sir Walter was now becoming fretful and impatient at the lawyer's loquacity. He moved restlessly in his chair, and passed his hand athwart his brow.

"Excuse me, Mr. Squelch, interrupting you," he said, "but I believe you have something of importance to communicate to me. May I inquire what it is? You are not going to involve me in a law-suit, I trust."

The lawyer coughed, dropped his loquaciousness (which only overcame him when warmed with wine, which he rarely indulged in), settled himself in his chair, put on his gold spectacles, through which he appeared to scrutinise his companion through and through, and seemed now prepared for business and business only.

"The object of my present visit, Sir Walter," he said, "is, as I am about to explain, one of considerable importance both to you and the ends of justice. I need not—ahem!—remind you, sir, as to the melancholy circumstances of the—the decease of your late lamented uncle; and I am proud to say my excellent friend. I say, that amongst the articles stolen from the person of the deceased, the chief and most important was his gold watch, which had evidently been wrested violently from the chain."

The speaker ceased his harangue to take a pinch of snuff. Sir Walter nodded affirmatively, and Mr. Squelch then went on.

"Could you—are you in a position, if you saw it, to identify that watch?"

His listener started, and the blood fled from his cheek.

"Yes—that is, at least, I believe I could."

"But not positively?"

"I don't think I could be certain; but Giles, the butler, would be sure to be able to do so."

"He will do, then."

"He, in fact, was more with my uncle of late years than myself. But why—why do you ask these questions?"

"We have reason to believe that this watch has been discovered," returned the solicitor, in his peculiar quick manner, "and that it is now in the hands of the police."

Sir Walter threw himself back in his chair much affected by this intelligence. He gulped down a glass of wine, and this seemed to revive him somewhat.

"Perhaps, then, this terrible mystery may be cleared up yet," he said.

"Depend upon it, Sir Walter, it will."

"You really think so?"

"I do."

"I trust from my soul it may."

"Not a doubt of it, my dear sir—not a doubt of it; these things always are cleared up sooner or later."

"Where, then, is the watch now? Have you got it with you?"

Mr. Squelch blinked his eyes and snapped his teeth—almost as though he had got the watch in his mouth, and found some difficulty in swallowing it.

"Not I, Sir Walter," he said. "It is in the hands of the police authorities, as I informed you just now. In fact, a detective officer, who accompanied me hither, and whom I left at the inn in the village so as to avoid talk and annoyance to you, has it in his possession for the purpose of identification."

"Have you mentioned the purport of your visit to anybody down here?" demanded Lee, after a brief reflection.

"Mentioned it? Oh dear no;—I never mention anything to anybody, except to the person or persons therein concerned."

"Then we will go and see the officer;—or, stay; I do not see why he may not as well come here. No one will know him, and even if he were recognised, what would it signify? I will send for him; meanwhile, you can tell me all the circumstances of the case, and how it was the watch, should it turn out to be my poor uncle's, has been discovered after so long a time."

Mr. Squelch wrote a few words in his memorandum-book, tore out the page, folded it, and addressed it "Sergeant Browne."

Lee rang the bell, and desired the servant who responded to the summons to deliver the note to the gentleman to whom it was

addressed, and whom he would find at the "Blue Boar" inn—the chief house of entertainment for man and beast at Waverney.

"You are perfectly aware, Sir Walter," said Mr. Squelch, as soon as the man had gone from the room, "that a full description of the watch, so far, at least, as particulars were to be obtained, was placed in the hands of the police. That description was, of course, sent all over the kingdom; but, despite all this, the advertisements and the rewards, as well as the unremitting exertions of the police, no clue of any importance was obtained until last Tuesday evening, when the superintendent at Scotland-yard received a telegram from Liverpool, which induced him to despatch thither the officer who had originally had charge of the case." The little lawyer coughed, blew his nose in a huge red silk pocket-handkerchief, and then went on. "It appears that on Tuesday morning a woman entered a pawnbroker's shop in Liverpool, for the purpose of pledging a gold watch. As she was stylishly dressed, no suspicion was at first aroused in the mind of the shopman. He asked what sum she wanted upon it, and she requested ten pounds, entering into some statement that the money was required immediately for a particular object, and that the pledge would be redeemed in about a week. Still the young man entertained no suspicion, though he afterwards recollected that the woman kept her veil down during the whole of the transaction. The money was advanced, and the female departed, entered a cab which was waiting at the door, and was driven away. The principal of the establishment, however, examined the watch, and, being a good judge, instantly discovered that it was intrinsically worth at least five times the amount that had been demanded for it. His suspicions were aroused that something was wrong; and, upon inquiry, he ascertained that the watch corresponded precisely with the description of your uncle's, with which he had been supplied by the authorities."

Perceiving that Mr. Squelch stopped to regain his breath, Lee poured himself out a brimming glass of wine, which he swallowed at a gulp. His face expressed an attentiveness which was almost painful.

"Proceed, sir," said he. "The pawnbroker, of course, communicated with the police?"

"Precisely so, Sir Walter. The first thing was, of course, to make certain the watch was really identical with poor Sir William's. I myself had kept in constant communication with Scotland-yard, and this morning Sergeant Browne called upon me at my office, with the information I have just disclosed."

"The woman who pledged the watch?—have they succeeded in tracing her?" demanded Lee, with eagerness.

Mr. Squelch refreshed himself with a pinch of Irish-rapee before he deigned to reply.

"No ;—at least, I believe not, at present," he said. "They have arrested two or three women upon suspicion ; but the shopman who received the pledge was unable to identify either of them, and they were consequently discharged. *There*, indeed, Sir Walter, lies the difficulty."

The baronet was about to ask some other question when the door opened, and the footman who had taken the note to Sergeant Browne entered the room, and announced that that gentleman had arrived.

"Desire him to walk in," said the young man, rising from his seat.

The next instant Sergeant Browne entered the room, hat in hand, and bowing and scraping respectfully.

Mr. Squelch formally introduced him to Sir Walter, who invited him to be seated, and to help himself to some wine, with both of which invitations the sergeant complied,—the former with deferential reluctance, the latter with sparkling eyes, and no reluctance at all.

"I have already explained to Sir Walter Lee the object of our visit here, sergeant," observed Mr. Squelch, by way of introduction.

The sergeant smacked his lips, as he set his emptied glass upon the table, and furtively glanced at the decanter, like *Oliver Twist*—as "though he wanted more." "Just so, sir," he said, respectfully. "Exactly so." Whereupon he produced a huge gold watch, and placed it in the hands of Sir Walter Lee. "Are you able, sir," he said, "to identify this?"

The young baronet's hand trembled.

"Yes, gentlemen, I believe this was indeed the one which my poor uncle used to wear ; but stay one minute, and we will be assured." He rang the bell. "Ask Giles to step this way," he said.

Giles entered the room.

"Giles, I want your opinion : do you think you have ever seen this watch before ? Examine it carefully before you reply."

The stout butler took the watch, and as his eye fell upon it his hand trembled almost as much as his master's had trembled before.

"Seen it, Sir Walter ?" he almost gasped. "Lord bless you, Sir Walter, yes—by the Lord it is—it is poor Sir William's—that I can swear !"

Sir Walter, Mr. Squelch, and the detective remained closeted together for nearly an hour.

CHAPTER XXV.

A MYSTERIOUS WARNING.

THE morning after the picnic was the time appointed for the return of George Wetherby and his friend, the lieutenant, to town. The Rector and his wife had almost entreated the two young men to prolong their visit, and even Grace, in a quieter and more demure fashion, had intimated that if her cousin and his military friend had responded to those entreaties, she would not, for her part, have been particularly sorry. She did not, of course, say this, in plain words. Lieutenant Dent, however, declared that he had promised his father he would personally pay his respects to him at Coventry on the very next day; and Wetherby also protested, and with truth, that he had pledged his word to Dent, to accompany him thither. So that, as Mr. Evelyn always regarded a promise given as a thing sacred and inviolable before all things else, he no longer desired the two gentlemen to remain, but cordially approved of their morality in so strenuously adhering to their words. They were not to leave Waverney until mid-day. A few hours therefore remained to them before they started. On the previous evening it was settled that Sir Walter should come over for them early, and that they should then take a walk across country together. Their surprise was consequently somewhat great that he did not make his appearance at the time agreed upon.

"Dear me! Andrew," said Mrs. Evelyn, with profound seriousness, "I wonder Sir Walter doesn't come! I hope, my dear, there was nothing wrong about that message which called him away last night!"

"Nothing wrong about it, my dear?" replied the Rector, good-naturedly. "In what way 'wrong' do you mean?"

Mrs. Evelyn was threading her needle. She shook her head dubiously.

"Why, Andrew," she returned, "surely it couldn't have been a trap to get him out into the dark to murder him, like poor Sir William—or at least to rob him, poor young man! These thieves and robbers are very cunning, my dear; being tricked into an ambush seems to me like falling in love—it's very easy to get in, and not so easy to get out."

Her husband laughed, and pointed out the improbability of this theory being the correct one, inasmuch as the bearer of the message to Sir Walter was Sir Walter's own man.

"Dear me! yes; how very silly I am, to be sure, not to have thought of that before!" cried she, a new light of comfort breaking

over her homely but good-natured face. "But don't you think, my dear, it would be a good plan for you just to step over to the Court, in *case* anything should be the matter? Perhaps you might be able to assist him, you know. Poor youth! he has no friend now."

"I don't know, my dear; perhaps I may as well. But there are George and his friend; let us hear what they say about it."

Mr. Evelyn went therefore into the garden, where Wetherby and the lieutenant were admiring the worthy clergyman's flowers, the various beauties of which were being pointed out to them by Grace.

"I propose that *we* take a walk over there," said Wetherby, in reply to the question. "If Lee is unable to keep his appointment with us, there is an end of the matter. If he *is* able to keep it, we may as well take our proposed walk in that direction as in any other."

"Bravo! spoken with the logic of a true barrister at the bar!" exclaimed the Rector, slapping his nephew on the back, gaily.

Wetherby replied by a shrug of the shoulders and a grimace.

"My logic is good enough, I dare say," he observed; "but unfortunately, the only 'bar' at which I have occasion to use it is the bar of a certain pub. in Shoe-lane, which I, with some other aspiring but unsuccessful members of the profession, not unfrequently patronise at noon, and—and—hem!—at night."

They agreed, therefore, that it should be as Wetherby proposed; but just as they had come to the determination, the sound of a horse's hoofs clattering along the road fell upon the ear.

"This may be Sir Walter now," the Rector said.

"Possibly," rejoined George; "yet, if he is coming for a walk with us, I should scarcely conceive he would make his advent upon horseback."

The new-comer, whoever he might be, at this instant reined up at the rectory-gate, dismounted from his steed, advanced up the garden, and was at once recognised, not as Sir Walter, but as Sir Walter's groom.

He touched his hat to the Rector, and handed him a letter.

"From Sir Walter Lee," he said. "There is no answer, sir, I believe."

"This, I suppose, will explain," the Rector observed.

The letter was addressed to Lieutenant Dent, and was dated the previous night. Lee briefly apologised for his inability to keep his appointment; that he had just received news of important business which called him the very first thing in the morning to town.

"*N'import*," said Wetherby, philosophically. "For my part, ladies and gentlemen, I don't mind confessing I would quite as willingly spend what little time remains where we are, as in tramping

about, and fatiguing oneself with horridly romantic lanes, and clam-bering perpendicular hills, goodness knows where all."

So the three gentlemen remained with Grace in the garden, and made themselves as comfortable as they could.

Dent and Wetherby returned to the City by the noon train.

A very brief sojourn at Fig-tree-court enabled the former to transact all his business there, and to make what arrangements were needful in the office for a further journey into the country, which arrangements chiefly consisted in the changing the card upon the door from "Return at one o'clock" to "Return at half-past three;" settling with his laundress, procuring a change of linen, and so forth. The two gentlemen had tea together before they started, to fortify them against the fatigues of their journey; and then they repaired to the North-Western Railway Terminus, at Euston-square, and were soon speeding away towards Coventry.

It would be foreign to the purport of this book to record minutely the incidents of this visit, inasmuch as they bear in no way upon the history of Waverney Court. The only circumstances with which it would be well to acquaint the reader are these:— Firstly, that, somewhat to the surprise of George Wetherby, Dent never alluded to the little scene on the island which had so much affected him, and so strangely; but that, on the contrary, he showed the utmost reluctance to allude in any way to the incidents of that ever-memorable day; and that, moreover, whenever Wetherby spoke of the picnic, his friend became gloomy and taciturn, as though there was something which disturbed his mind. Secondly, that during their stay with Mr. Dent, senior, who was a kind-hearted but somewhat old-fashioned and puritanical gentleman, the lieutenant received intimation that he must be prepared to leave England in a week's time, as his regiment was ordered to Malta—which intimation the young soldier, greatly to the astonishment of Wetherby, hailed rather with satisfaction than regret. This latter fact brought Wetherby's stay to a somewhat earlier termination than he intended. He felt that, under the circumstances, however strenuously his friend might protest to the contrary, a stranger in the house was scarcely to be desired.

Lieutenant Dent having to report himself at the Horse Guards, George returned with him to town. Mr. Wetherby repaired to his chambers at Fig-tree-court, while his friend attended to the business which was uppermost in his mind. It came to pass that the very morning before Lieutenant Dent quitted England with his regiment Mr. Wetherby received a letter from Waverney, which ran as follows:—

"The Rectory, Waverney,

"September 1st, 1862.

"MY DEAR GEORGE,—It was always my custom, whenever I was

about to take a step of any importance to myself or to my family, or whenever any particular stroke of fortune, either good or evil, has happened to us, to make a point of communicating, at an early opportunity, with my dear relations on the subject.

"You, my dear boy, the child of my only sister, are the only *near* relation I have left now, and I therefore take this occasion to write to you, and I am sure you will rejoice with me at anything that is likely to be conducive to the happiness of your cousin Grace. You will, no doubt, be surprised when I inform you that Sir Walter Lee has made an offer of marriage to her; yet such has been indeed the case. You will readily suppose, my dear George, that so brilliant a chance for my dear child, which is certainly much more than I ever could or ever did expect for her, providing her both with wealth and position, and with what is of far more importance, a good husband, to love her and take care of her, when it may please the over-ruling Providence to call me away,—you will readily suppose, I say, that such an offer has filled me with heartfelt joy and thankfulness. That it has done so, I very freely confess; and I am very grateful to Him from whom all good things come, for His merciful care of my dear child. Yet I also confess to you, George, that this proposal has another point of view which causes me some uneasiness and perturbation.

"In the first place, I am well aware that Sir Walter Lee has—at least at one time of his life—borne a character which I should deeply deplore should attach to the husband of Grace. At the same time, I know that his errors have been those of a young man, and errors from which few young men are wholly exempt. Besides, if these errors are of the *past*—as I hope and trust they are—it is not for a poor erring mortal to be too severe in judging the sins of his fellow-men.

"There is also another reason which causes me some uneasiness, and which I allude to with diffidence, since I fear it springs from a pride which I should endeavour to vanquish;—I mean, George, that I am haunted by the dread that they who do not know my character and feelings might attribute this marriage between Grace and one who is, socially, in a sphere above her, to intriguing, or, at least, to worldly-mindedness on my part, and even on the part of poor Grace herself. I have pointed out this to Sir Walter Lee himself; but he, with the generosity and impetuosity of a young man in love, declares, of course, that the obligations are on the *other* side; that instead of him raising Grace to an exalted position, it will be she who raises *him*. In fact, he will listen to no objection of this kind, and appears only too anxious to remove any others I may cast in the way.

"I have endeavoured to conquer this feeling of pride, for I do not think I ought to suffer any vanity to interfere with my daughter's happiness, which I really believe, from what I have been able to glean from Grace herself, is at stake; since, from many little things which I have quietly observed, I do sincerely think she is as much attached to him as he to her.

"I have not yet given Sir Walter my answer, having reserved to my-

self a day or two for consideration. I do not think I shall withhold my consent, but I should like, my dear George, to have your opinion of this matter before I thoroughly make up my mind.

"I remain, my dear George,

"Yours affectionately,

"ANDREW EVELYN."

Wetherby folded up the letter, when he had read it, with a grim smile.

"So ho!" he muttered. "And my dear innocent old uncle imagines Mr. George Wetherby 'will be very much surprised to hear,' &c. He doesn't know of a certain conversation which the said Mr. G. W. and his friend happened to overhear the other afternoon between the lady and gentleman in question."

Then he opened the letter again, and read it over once more.

"I am glad to hear it confirmed in plain black and white, though," he added, as he pulled out from a drawer half-a-quire of paper, spread the same upon his desk, and dipped his pen preparatory to writing. "And yet—hum!" and here he put the end of his quill into his mouth, biting it vehemently; "by Jove, there seems to be a certain mystery overhanging this Sir Walter Lee which I don't quite like. I wish to goodness I could unravel it all! What the deuce do all these mysterious conversations between Lee and Dent signify? And why does the latter seem so strangely affected by some secret of the baronet's which he possesses avowedly, and which he declares to be of such importance that he will not reveal it? Lee certainly seems to be a good sort of a young fellow, and frank and generous beyond question. Perhaps, after all, it is nothing—nothing, at least, which should cause poor Grace to refuse such an eligible offer—a baronet, and a fairly wealthy one withal! Egad, she'll be my Lady Lee, and certainly have a much better chance than I had in store for her poor sister Emma; unless, indeed, a certain legal gentleman should be unexpectedly, and I am bound to add, undeservedly, raised to the woolsack, or obtain some other elevated dignity of the kind;—well, well! *She*, poor girl—ah! what a mysterious fate was *hers*! By heaven, if it should come in my way of life that I should ever fall across the villain who seduced her, and to *know* that he had seduced her——"

Mr. Wetherby did not complete the sentence, but struck his desk violently with his clenched hand. Perhaps the reason George Wetherby did not wind up his threat with a tremendous vow of vengeance against the said person unknown was an inward conviction, prompted by his practical good sense, that vows of vengeance, though sometimes made in real life, are rarely kept, except in the pages of a novel. Perhaps also the well-established fact that

it is difficult to do two things at the same time, may have had something to do with his abrupt "pull up" also; since by the time he had arrived at the words where he broke off, he was rapidly scribbling upon the note-paper before him, and had likely enough almost forgotten what was in his thoughts a moment before. The letter he was writing ran simply as follows:—

"Fig-tree-court, E.C.,

"2nd September, 1862.

"MY DEAR UNCLE,—I have just received your letter, and am heartily glad at the bright destiny which appears to belong to my little 'coz.' Grace. You ask my opinion. I don't think there can be two opinions on the subject. I congratulate you very sincerely, and I congratulate Grace; let me add, also, I congratulate Sir Walter Lee,—indeed, I do not know whether he's not the most lucky of the lot of you.

"I hope you will write me, and let me know how things go on; and I hope, also, that Miss Grace (I beg her pardon, I mean my Lady Lee) will not forget her plebeian relatives at her wedding-feast. Meanwhile, with love to her and aunt,

"Believe me affectionately yours,

"GEORGE WETHERBY."

Having finished this letter, sealed it, and stuck a postage-stamp upon it—the wrong side upwards—Mr. Wetherby went off to keep an appointment with the lieutenant, posting the letter on his way. Lieutenant Dent had just come from the agents, and had been busy all the morning making arrangements for his departure from England, which was to take place two days hence.

Wetherby took occasion to show his friend the letter he had received that morning from the Rector, and ventured to make some laughing remark about the conversation they had overheard on the island. Dent read the letter in silence, and with compressed lips. He returned it to Wetherby, when he had got to the end, with a somewhat stern expression of countenance, that puzzled the latter not a little, though he whistled some operatic air, and pretended not to observe it.

"She is a nice girl—a charming girl, and I hope she may be happy," the young soldier said calmly, but in a voice which Wetherby thought was scarcely firm and steady. And that was all he said.

George turned away and stamped impatiently upon the ground.

"Deuce take me if I can make it out!" he muttered savagely. "What on earth can this love-making and marrying of Lee and Grace signify to Dent? The fellow must be in love with the girl himself, I suppose. I'll be hanged if I don't try conclusions with the fellow on the point. I say, Dent," he added, aloud.

"Well," returned the young soldier, curtly, "what is it?"

"Do you know what I'm inclined to think?"

"How should I? Some folly, I'll be bound."

"Much obliged, my dear sir, for the compliment, I am sure; well, I'm inclined to think you are smitten with Grace yourself, and are jealous of Lee's good luck; that's just what I think."

Dent smiled grimly.

"Do you know what I think, Wetherby?" he said.

"No; what?—may I ask?"

"That if you do really think what you say you do——"

"Well, I do, upon my honour, old boy."

"Then you're a great fool for your pains, that's all."

Not in the slightest degree ruffled by the words or the curt manner in which they were spoken, Wetherby placed his hand upon his heart, and bowed with mock gravity.

"You flatter me, my dear sir," he said. "Your complimentary speeches are perfectly overpowering. Anything else in a small way, if you please?"

The chafed and fretful expression on Dent's countenance cleared off, and gave place to a smile. It was impossible to withstand the good-natured railery and *bonhomie* of George Wetherby.

"Forgive me, George," said Dent, holding out his hand. "I beg pardon, old fellow, for my roughness; you must bear with me, if you can."

"Psha!" retorted Wetherby, shaking the said hand cordially. "Why, Dent, it is you who are the fool, if you suppose I care a dump what you say to me. By Jove, no; George Wetherby is too profound a philosopher, as I beg to remind you, to care for that."

On the day appointed Dent, with the rest of the officers of the gallant 99th, left the shores of England, our young barrister accompanying him to Southampton, where the regiment had to embark. A few days after Dent had sailed from the white cliffs of Albion, a letter, addressed to "George Wetherby, Esq., Fig-tree-court, Temple, London," was delivered by the post, and placed in Mr. Wetherby's hands by his deaf housekeeper.

"Who the deuce can this be from? I was hoping to hear from Dent before this. I suppose I may as well read this disappointing missive," said that gentleman, glancing at the letter as he lingered lazily over his solitary breakfast.

He opened the said letter and began to peruse it carelessly enough. The first words caused him to open his eyes rather wider than usual. As he went on, so great was his excitement that he nearly capsized the tea-tray, and the whole of its contents.

"What in the name of the powers of darkness have we here?" he ejaculated. And he turned to the envelope and searched eagerly for the post-mark. "Posted in London, too! Upon my word,

Mr. Wetherby, my very dear sir, this is about the most puzzling of all the very puzzling things which have happened to your distinguished self during the last eventful six months. Let us have another peep at this mysterious *document*, I suppose I must call it, for it isn't exactly a letter; perhaps an extra perusal may illuminate the profound obscurity in which it is involved."

Whereupon the speaker, whose face wore a half-amused half astonished expression, read the "document" aloud, which was as follows:—

"If you would save your cousin from misery and shame, let her not marry Sir Walter Lee. Or if an anonymous writer's warning exhortation is not so much to be regarded, at least ascertain, before an irretrievable step is taken, some particulars of the history of Sir Walter's life."

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHIEFLY EPISTOLATORY.

"WHAT shall I do with it?" the young lawyer exclaimed, as he sat down to his desk with an expression of mingled bewilderment, apprehension, and comicality upon his face. "Who the deuce does it come from?—that is the question which mystifies me most of anything."

He mentally ran over the names of anybody and everybody that he thought it at all possible could have been the author and sender of the admonition he had received. First of all, he asked himself could any of the Waverney swains, who were enamoured of the Rector's daughter, have taken this treacherous method of avenging their jealousy upon Grace and their successful rival? This was very possible, albeit improbable, inasmuch as Mr. Wetherby had never heard that Grace had any admirers at Waverney—such admirers, at least, as would feel themselves entitled to take revenge.

"That I don't know any of these rustic swains to be admirers of little coz. amounts, however, to nothing at all," George soliloquised; "for if she had any such rural sweethearts, I fancy it is not at all likely I should be let into the secret."

So he concluded that this hypothetical solution of the mystery might remain until a better could be found. Next he asked himself whether it might not have emanated from some jealous or envious young Waverney lady, who had, perhaps, been disappointed in not getting Sir Walter for herself? This theory was, however, scarcely likely, since the epistle was evidently written by a masculine hand. Besides, what lady could have been likely to have written such a document to *him*? Then arose the question—a ques-

tion, indeed, which had somehow been obtruding itself through the thin surface (if I may so metaphorically express myself) of all other questions—could this anonymous letter have come from *Lieutenant Dent*? There were many reasons to think this supposition at least probable, as the reader is already aware. On the other hand, however, there was not the slightest doubt that when this was written Dent must actually have arrived at Malta, or certainly that he must have been very far towards being there on the high sea. But if it had been sent by him would it not bear a foreign postmark? whereas this was posted in London, in the western-central district, on September 21st. Besides, why should Dent have sent such a letter as this, when a few plain, straightforward words, if he had wished to have prevented the marriage of Grace and Lee, might have accomplished his purpose; that is, at least, supposing this ominous communication to have really any significance and truth? Upon the whole, therefore, this latter hypothesis appeared to Mr. Wetherby the most improbable of any he had yet conceived. Having thus spent a good hour of a bright, sunshiny morning in bootless speculations, Mr. Wetherby again asked himself the question—"What the deuce am I to do with it?" Whether any inward light had dawned upon his intelligence from this last time of asking, or whether, not being able to obtain such a light, Mr. Wetherby adopted the very natural alternative of doing without it, he settled himself to his desk, and prepared himself pen, paper, and ink. "I will send the thing to him whom most it doth concern, at all events," he said, "and then he can decide for himself what *he* will do with it." And then he scribbled a short letter to his uncle, in the dashing scrawl which he was pleased to call his "handwriting."

"Fig-tree-court, Temple,

"September 22nd, 1862.

"DEAR SIR,—I send you enclosed an anonymous epistle of a somewhat strange and, to me, inexplicable character, which I received by this morning's post. I have been cudgelling my brains for the last hour in futile endeavours to ascertain the aim and object of the writer (whoever he may be), but can make neither head nor tail of it. If you want my opinion, it is this: that if the writer really did know anything so prejudicial in Sir Walter's character as to render his marriage with Grace undesirable, he would probably say so boldly, instead of endeavouring to injure him by cowardly and obscure attacks. I confess it appears to me to be most likely the emanation of some private spitefulness, or something of the kind. I thought, however, I should not be doing my duty to keep it from you, and have sent it, therefore, to you, to do with it what you please. For my part, I know of few parallels to it—the anonymous warning of the gunpowder plot to Lord Monteagle being, of course, exceptional. Perhaps

your sagacity and local knowledge may enable you, like King James, to discover the mine which is about to explode at your feet.

"Let me know what you think of it—that is, if you deem it worth thinking about at all ; and believe me,

"Your affectionate nephew,

"GEORGE."

By the next morning's post, Mr. Wetherby received the following, from the Rector, in reply :—

"Rectory, Waverney,

"September 23rd, 1862.

"MY DEAR GEORGE,—I have just received your kind letter, with enclosure, for which I thank you most sincerely. The latter I deem perfectly worthless, and have already put it in the fire, lest it should do harm to anybody. I agree with your opinion of it entirely. I should certainly never allow an anonymous accusation against any man to balance in my opinion even the weight of a feather, much less would I do so against the man whom my dear child has chosen for her husband. With such utter contempt do I treat this attempt at *moral assassination*, that I have not shown the cowardly paper even to my wife, or to Sir Walter Lee himself. As I have already informed you how I have disposed of it, you will admit there is little likelihood of my doing so in time to come. No, my dear George, I shall not even *mention* it to a soul, and I am sure I may rely upon your keeping silence also. It is known only to you and me,—let it remain so.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"ANDREW EVELYN."

After the receipt of this letter, he heard nothing more from his uncle for some months. But about three weeks after he had parted from Lieutenant Dent he received a long and very kind epistle from that gentleman. Dent began by announcing his safe arrival at his destination, and gave a brief but laughable description of the voyage to Malta ; also of the society, &c., of that place ; detailing every scrap of news which he thought might prove interesting to his friend. He then proceeded to ask him how he—Mr. Wetherby—had been getting on in the world during the past three weeks, and inquired after the health of Mr. Evelyn, his wife, and daughter, desiring to be kindly remembered to them, and requesting Wetherby to write to him at an early time.

All this contributed to make George congratulate himself that he did not mention the lieutenant's name to his uncle in connection with the mysterious warning he had received.

"For," argued he, "if Dent had sent that letter, it is very unlikely he would have written to me again so soon ; at all events, this proves he is at Malta, and that he has been there some time ;

whereas the other missive was, beyond all question, posted in London."

Nevertheless, if I were to say that George Wetherby never felt rather uneasy in his mind as to whether he were not mistaken after all, I should not represent the fact. Sometimes—very often, indeed—his recollection would revert to that strange conversation, a portion only of which he had overheard, between Dent and Sir Walter Lee, in the parlour of the Rectory at Waverney—a conversation which he was well assured was the cause of the lieutenant declining to finish the story about his rencontre with Lee and the beautiful unknown in Regent-street. Then again, and above all, was the extraordinary emotion which Dent had displayed upon over-hearing Sir Walter's offer of marriage to Grace. How was all this to be accounted for? A thousand times he asked himself this question, and a thousand times did he find himself at a loss for a plausible reply.

"Time will reveal all these deuced mysteries, I suppose," he muttered to himself on more than one occasion; "and I must e'en wait patiently. And yet—and yet, my God!—if anything were to betide poor Grace, I think it would be the death of her poor father; and I—reprobate as I am—should feel it! I think I should feel it little less than the blow which robbed him of his other child, and me perhaps of a wife I could have loved."

About a month after he received his letter from Lieutenant Dent, one morning, as he was glancing over the columns of a newspaper, his eye alighted upon a paragraph which at once rivetted his attention. The paragraph was brief, and ran as follows:—

"Our readers will remember that a few months since a gentleman—Sir Walter William Lee, Bart., of Waverney Court, Waverney, in the county of Kent, was barbarously murdered in his own grounds. His watch, purse, and other articles of value were stolen from his person; but though the shot which killed him was heard by many persons in the vicinity, the murderer or murderers have not, up to the present time, been apprehended. A full account of this awful tragedy was given in our columns at the time.

"But though the baying of the sleath hounds of justice have not been heard, they have been silently but surely following the trail. A short time ago it transpired that a woman had entered a pawnbroker's establishment in the vicinity of Liverpool, and that she succeeded in obtaining the sum of £10 upon a gold watch which has since proved to have been that wrested from the person of the murdered gentleman. Unfortunately, this important discovery was not made until the woman had succeeded in effecting her departure.

"Several suspected females of bad character have been arrested on

suspicion and examined by the magistrates, but through the inability of the shopman to identify them, the charge has hitherto failed to be brought home to them. But though no satisfactory circumstance has yet transpired, we may rest assured the lynx-eyed officers of justice have not yet lost the clue, and that the wondrous sagacity of our sharp-witted detectives, though baffled for a moment, is not diverted from the trail.

"We await the result with the intensest interest. It is some consolation to know that the sword of the avenging angel is drawn from its scabbard never more to be sheathed until the shedder of blood has been arraigned before the tribunals of his country, and has paid the dreadful penalty mete to his fearful crime."

"And so," muttered George, who perused the grandiloquent paragraph with interest, "and so this mysterious murder has cropped up again, has it? Well, egad! I suppose *this* will be cleared up some day or other, together with the rest of the unfathomable things connected with the same illustrious family."

After this George Wetherby heard nothing more of the murder, of Lieutenant Dent, of Sir Walter Lee, or even of his uncle and the family;—in short, nothing of anybody or anything in any way connected with this story, for a period of several months. He ran down to Waverney for a day or two at Christmas time, and received as cordial a welcome as he expected. He then heard that the marriage of Grace and her betrothed was fixed to take place in the summer of the ensuing year. But of this I will speak in the next chapter.

REMINISCENCES OF SHEPHERD LIFE IN BUENOS AYRES

IN the year 186—, I, with one or two of my companions, made up our minds to seek that fortune in another land which we saw little prospect of gaining here. A restless and adventurous spirit had gained complete possession of us all, and the jog-trot existence which we alone had to look forward to was deemed by us lame and uninteresting in the extreme. After much consideration from some of us, and complete hap-hazard from others, Buenos Ayres was chosen as our Eldorado; and in this short sketch I purpose giving an account of my experiences while there.

We left Liverpool in the good ship "Ocean Queen," on the 1st of June, and, after a voyage almost completely void of interest, we arrived safely in Buenos Ayres early in July, full of hope in the bright future we believed in store for us, and heartily tired of the long monotonous voyage, salt provisions, scarcity of water, and all the ills that existence on shipboard necessitates. Immediately on landing at the Mole, my hand was warmly clasped by an old school companion, who had been advised by me some months before of my probable arrival in the country, and who, by good luck, was in town at the time on business. I was heartily glad to see his smiling and well-known face, and to feel the grip of a hand I knew was a friend's. What questions he asked, to be sure! and how they rolled out one after another, till I thought he would never cease asking! and then what delight he showed when I told him the old folks were well, and that all his old companions begged to be remembered by him, and that they all wished him luck and success in life! indeed, he seemed as glad to see me as I was to see him, and so, gossiping pleasantly about all our mutual friends and old schoolfellows, we walked arm-in-arm through the city, till we came to Mrs. Knox's boarding-house, where we purposed staying for the night, till I should leave for the "camp"—I may as well explain here that the "camp" means anywhere out of the city—and as the means whereby my fortune was to be made lay in this "camp," I was anxious to get to it as soon as I could.

My friend, Robert McNeak (Bob I always called him, as we both came from Scotland), had been in the city for several days, and was obliged to leave on the morrow for his little "Puésta," ninety miles away, where his flocks were then in the unthrifty hands of a stranger; and this state of matters was making him most anxious, I soon perceived. He had only two horses with him, which he required for the journey home, and besides, I could not

ride a mile then without feeling the worse for it ; so I made up my mind to join him at his "diggings," as he called his little place, by the first conveyance I could get. Next morning my friend left, and I started with the regular, "Diligència," which was to take me to the little town of Chascomus, after which I was to find my way as best I could to my friend's hut. I then parted with all my ship-fellows, and, in all probability, we will never again meet.

Oh, what a mad drive was that I now commenced ! For two whole days, and cold and wintry days they were, did we gallop through that desolate country. In many places the "camp" was flooded with water, but through it all we dashed. Wildly, and like a phantom coach, through mud and water, rushed the half-tamed and excited horses, recklessly driven by the almost as untamed "peons." It seemed a strange, weird day's journey to me, and should I live to be as old as the "oldest inhabitant," never will I forget these two days. Sometimes the road was fearfully bad, and we had as many as twenty horses pulling us on during one stage, but withal we got on but slowly, and I soon felt, without any doubt, that I should be under the necessity of trying to get something to eat, as I had then fasted for six or seven hours, and the fresh and keen air had made the said something the most desirable thing I knew of at the moment. But how was I to get it ? I could speak no Spanish, the "Panadéro" could speak no English, so that I saw at once there was a slight difficulty in the matter ; but no one knows his inherent powers till he is placed in circumstances to bring them into play. By signs and wonders I did it all. By signs I got bread, though I must confess I tried the French word for it, which turned out to have almost the same sound as the Spanish word "pan," but everything else I wanted I got by signs, and rare fun the natives had at "le polre Ingles." But perhaps the most amusing incident of the journey happened towards the afternoon of the first day, when we reached the only river which we passed on our journey, where we were told to get out of the "Diligència," but for what reason I, at least, was quite at a loss to discover. One of the peons held out his foot, all the while making some most violent and eccentric gesticulations, when, after some ludicrous guesses, which seemed to delight the peons and my fellow passengers, I found out he wished me to make a ladder of his foot, and mount behind him, after which he was to swim his horse across the river. What a predicament I was in then, for as I had very little spare cash, I was obliged to be careful in the disposal of my luggage, and had only taken one bag with me of the regulation weight ; but I managed to carry all I wanted on my person, for before leaving I had put on two pairs of trousers, two waist-coats, two coats, and a top coat. In these clothes there were

twenty-five pockets, each filled with something or other. I had my revolver, and four or five pounds of shot, stockings, shirts, a pair of boots, books, and some dozens of smaller articles; in fact, I was loaded almost to the ground, and was nearly frozen to death besides, and stiff with sitting so long in one position, and I could not ride; but, in spite of all, I managed to scramble up somehow, and reached the other side in safety, affording a butt for the most unkind laughter and jokes of the passengers and peons, of the exact meaning of which I was happily ignorant.

At last I arrived safely in Chascomus, and again my difficulties began, but luckily I had a letter of introduction to the Scotch parson of the district (Chascomus "partido" is quite a Scotch colony), who, save one other man, was the only person who could speak English in the little town. I found out where he lived, and presented my letter, in which my own parson at home had recommended me to his pastoral care, and had asked him earnestly to look after my spiritual welfare. I do not know whether he had got to this part of the contents or not, but almost the first question he asked was, "What spirits will you take?" which joke pleased me very much, and the spirits too; as, after the long and cold journey, I felt none the worse for a good stiff "tot;" after doing justice to which, and thanking the rev. gentleman for his kindness, I went to the English store to see how I could best find my way to my friend's hut. By good luck I found two men there who were going, with a cart full of purchases they had been making, to within a few miles of my friend's house, and I gladly accepted their invitation to accompany them home for that night; but they frankly told me that I would require to wait some time yet before they started, as, not being in the village every day, they were determined to get jolly before they left, and in consequence of which sage resolution it was nearly sunset when we started. This again, though but a short ride, was about as rough a one as the other I had just completed, but they both gave me rare sport all the way home. I soon found that each man had given his favourite horse for the occasion, and I was asked every minute almost which was doing their work best, and I found great difficulty in pleasing both, or even one of them, so that I had to exert all my wits to keep peace betwixt the two on the one hand, and betwixt myself and each of them separately on the other. And what lies, too, they invented for my special benefit; and I did believe some of them a little, though for the most part they were easily enough seen through. Robert B——, the one I had spoken to first, insisted I should go home with him that night, and he would see me all right at my friend's next morning, only he had a black woman who kept house for him, and she was a tearer. He assured me I was on no account to cross her in any

way, and I was always to take a cue for my behaviour from him. I promised anything he asked, and it was with a feeling of strong curiosity that I got out of the cart at our journey's end. After following him into his hut, a most agreeable disappointment awaited me; a blooming country-woman met us at the door, bid me welcome with the greatest good-humour and heartiness, and three or four rosy little children danced round their "dady," demanding "doulce" in a way that showed they were sure of getting it; and the strange man, as they called me, whose pockets also were plenished with the same dainties, was soon on the best possible terms with the merry little creatures. I was soon seated at a hearty supper, and after a good stiff glass of gin I was shown to bed, where I comfortably spent my first night in a South American shepherd's hut, dreaming pleasant dreams of the great success I was to have in this my adopted country. By six o'clock I got up, and assisted to make a good fire for breakfast, which I knew was the duty of whoever was first awake, after which I sucked my first cup of "mate," and although I afterwards got to be very fond of it, my first opinion was that it was nasty in the extreme. The fire, too, was a source of both wonder and amusement to me. In that country there are neither trees nor coal, and all food is cooked at a fire made either of cow or sheep manure, and I soon saw that a better fire could scarcely be got, as it gives out great heat, is easily lighted, and produces little ash. After breakfast I got on horseback, a labour of some difficulty with me, and went to have a look at my friend's "camp;" and as a description of his "camp" will apply to all the country for one hundred miles around the city of Buenos Ayres, I will give it here.

The "camp" is almost completely flat, and is covered with a thick, coarse grass, and with weeds of every kind; no tree is seen, save, perhaps, at great distances from each other, one huge tallow tree, which looks lonely and out of place in such a landscape; and there is scarcely any water, save here and there a little muddy pool, which serves the sheep to drink from. The wide prairie stretches as far as the eye can reach on every side; and there is nothing to break the monotony of the scene except here and there a few horses or cattle lazily browsing on the scanty herbage, or nibbling the tender grass at the roots of those gigantic thistles which stand so weirdly, boldly relieved against the horizon. The sky above is a deep blue, almost always cloudless and serene, and the warm sun above, and complete freedom from rain for months together, makes it one of the most delicious climates in the world. Flocks of emus rush swiftly past; wild cattle, too, at intervals come into view and disappear again as if into space, and flocks of horses, asses, and mules relieve the otherwise insupportable sameness of the landscape. All

kinds of game are plentiful. Deer, emus, wild turkeys, ducks, swans, and pigeons are easily shot. Foxes near Chascomus, and wild dogs a little further out, and further still pumas and jaguars, make it a paradise for the sportsman, while the great endurance of the horses makes hunting easy and pleasant. Average horses will gallop in one day seventy miles, and a very good horse has often been known to do his hundred and twenty miles in the twenty-four hours. They are all grass-fed, never sheltered from even the roughest weather, and after their day's work is over, turned adrift into the "camp," into the frost or pouring rain, as the case may be, and with all this rough treatment they are the hardiest little animals I believe in this world. The other side of the picture must also be looked to, for this climate has its drawback, as everything else has under the sun. To begin, the mosquitoes trouble some people to a most painful extent, and the abominable "bicho colerado" is worse still. The latter animal is almost microscopic, and gets under the skin, breeds there, and is a source of the greatest annoyance and disgust. People are covered with these terrible pests sometimes for months, and such remedies as the natives use, viz., boiling tatton, gin, a strong salt and water, scarcely ever have any beneficial effect. Tarantulas, too, are tolerably common, and you meet snakes occasionally, though accidents from them are few; enormous spiders and armies of ants, red and black, are disagreeable enough always; and the greatest pest of all, perhaps, though not dangerous, like the others, is the plague of flies. In the summer time, especially, life is almost a burden, owing to these creatures, and, on account of them, butcher meat will keep for scarcely two days, so that the dogs come in for the greater part of every animal killed for food.

But to resume. During the course of the day I arrived at my friend's hut, which, like almost all others in that country, was made of mud, and thatched with the long grass which grows in the more swampy parts of the "camp." I found him all alone, and he actually seemed to enjoy this strange existence. He lived alone, he watched his flocks alone, he cooked his own food, after first killing his sheep for that purpose; he was his own washerwoman, and sometimes for weeks together he never exchanged a word with anyone, and perhaps during that time did not see an intelligent being, even at a distance. This account somewhat damped my ardour, I own, and the glorious existence I thought in store for me somehow or other seemed more and more shadowy and unsubstantial; but, notwithstanding all, I made up my mind to go in for that sort of thing heartily, now that I was in the country, and to make the most of whatever life fate had in store for me. Next day I had a call from my friend of the day be-

fore, who had evidently been prepossessed by my appearance on the previous day, for he seemed anxious to secure my services. I engaged with him at the munificent salary of £2 per month, and rations and washing, and for which sum I was to act as his peon, and make myself generally useful. I was to take charge of his flock of some 2000 sheep, and assist him with his "point" of cattle, about 250 in number; and his horses too—about 25—were to be my charge,—all of which occupations seemed strange enough to me, who had scarcely ever lifted anything heavier than the pen or pencil, and who was more at home with figures than with the diseases of sheep or cattle. During the first four months I really enjoyed that wild, rough existence; and although the life was somewhat monotonous, still there was a strange charm about it too. Whose blood would not leap in his veins when dashing madly over mile after mile of prairie, hallooing wildly, and cracking the long stock-whip, driving before him, at headlong speed, his half-tamed charge, his dogs barking, the cattle bellowing, and his own trusty horse as keen as himself after the chase? It was altogether a new sensation for me, and I thought at the time I should never get tired of such a glorious existence. The calmer life of the shepherd, too, was not without its charms. At earliest sunrise I drove my flocks out of the "corral," and let them wander over the "camp," following them at a distance till they had settled, and to assure myself that there was no other flock within dangerous distance of my own. And then what pleasant conversations I sometimes had with the neighbouring shepherds, when the flocks did come in contact; and after driving them a score or so of yards apart, we dismounted, and lying at full length on the soft grass, lazily talked over old home stories, and discoursed with one another about our plans for future wealth; till, perhaps, in an hour's time, the flocks would slowly move home. We then bid each other "good-bye," mounted, and away, for other work was to be done. I had to plough, harrow, ditch, fence, and, in fact, to do anything and everything my employer put me to. Of course I was not well up to it all at first; but after a month or so I got exceedingly handy at all necessary work, and really liked it. But when a storm came, what a change came o'er the scene! The "camp" became filled and saturated with water, while heaven's floodgates seemed open. Rain poured in buckets-full, and the peon's life was miserable in the extreme. The sheep, during these storms, which fortunately never last long, get distracted, and rush off in all directions, objecting to be driven save by the wind, and rush into every fatal position, regardless of consequences to themselves and keepers. And during these storms how difficult it was to catch the horses, too! for the horses in that country are never confined in stables, as here; they wander

under the care of a mare, who is trained for the purpose, at their own will, all through your "camp"—and in your neighbour's, too, for that matter, as no one there is the least particular about the exact boundaries of their possessions. At night, then, my horse was tied to a post in front of the house till morning, when I mounted him to search for the rest of the horses. After, perhaps, half an hour or so, I usually found them, then drove them all into an enclosure erected for the purpose, and caught the one I wanted for the day, after sometimes a great deal of trouble. I was amused sometimes to see my master catching his horses. I always found him using some Spanish words, which he scarcely ever tried till all else failed, and of which I at first could understand nothing of their meaning; but I afterwards found out that he was swearing at them very forcibly indeed, but in an affectionate and coaxing tone of voice; and the horses almost always stood and allowed themselves to be caught after being so treated. I could not find out the reason for this for a long time, but my opinion now is that they had been used to these words when they were the property of the natives who had tamed them. Horses are wonderfully cheap in Buenos Ayres. I bought a beautiful black one, not four years old, and sound in every respect, for about fifty shillings, and that sum was more than its value, I am told, as the native from whom I bought it of course took advantage of a greenhorn such as I was at the time. Even the beggars in that country travel from house to house on horseback; and it was ludicrous to see perhaps two or three children on one horse dash up to the door and ask "carne," which they were almost sure to get; for butcher-meat is of scarcely any value in the "camp," and anyone will get half a sheep for the asking, as, owing to the climate, it is impossible to keep it fresh for any length of time.

The natives eat scarcely anything but beef. I remember calling with my master on a newly-married couple of native friends of his, and as soon as we arrived at his door we were politely asked to enter, and as he was just cooking dinner we were asked to partake. The dinner, which consisted of half a sheep, was to be cooked as an "asado," which is done as follows:—A long iron spit—the "asadón"—is run through the flesh, and the point stuck into the ground in the centre of the hut, at an angle of about 45 deg. Fire is then built under it, and the grease which drops into it keeps the fire bright and strong till the "asado" is cooked; after which each guest pulls out his own knife from his long riding-boot, or from his belt, and cuts off slice after slice, using his fingers for lack of something better, as a native never presents you with either a knife or fork; the latter instrument he has never seen save in some Englishman's house, and he can never get reconciled to its use.

After dinner we sit and suck "mate" for an hour or so, and gossip about things in general.

About the end of November I left my place and at once got another, some forty-five miles nearer the coast than Chascomus, and with an old Scotch friend of a Mr. Plough, who, with his wife and son, had emigrated from Scotland some three years before I joined them. They were old people then, who had been unfortunate in business, and had, even at their age, commenced the world again, and were determined either to make a competency and return home, or die in this far-off country, where, at any rate, they would be comfortable, and where they would enjoy a delicious climate for nearly the whole year, and where their son, at least, would have a good chance of becoming a rich man. Linked with these good people for some four months, I assisted at their shearing, worked in their garden, and tended their flock, and experienced from them the greatest kindness. The climate now became very hot, and the thermometer showed 90 deg. in the shade on New Year's-day. All the delicious fruits were now ripe. Melons and water-melons tempted the thirsty throat; peaches, figs, and grapes, were what we for the most part lived upon, and the daily "siesta" became now at once a luxury and a necessity. We had then little work to do, and less inclination to do even that little, and for the ten first months of the year I passed a lazy animal existence, feeling the heat far too oppressive to do work in, and feeling the loss of books and intellectual intercourse to be an almost unbearable evil. Mr. and Mrs. Plough, however, were perfectly happy and contented. Their house was one of the tidiest I ever saw in the country, and the old people took a great pride in keeping it clean and bright. The smooth mud floor was watered and swept twice a day; the mud walls were whitened by a clay which they collected for the purpose; the chairs and tables shone like looking-glasses, and the old folks themselves were so jolly and so happy that it was a treat to see them. As an idea of how they worked together the following story will give an illustration.

One stormy night the old man, during the absence of his son, was "rounding" the sheep, and trying to get them into the "corral" at all hazards, as he found himself unequal to the task of any longer keeping them together otherwise. But in vain he tried to induce the frightened animals to enter, till at last a stranger came on the scene, and together they managed to get them in. The night was dark, and a long cloak completely covered the stranger, so the old gentleman could not find out who had given him such timely help. "Whoever you be," said he, "your kindness deserves a 'tot'; so come into the house, man, and take a taste." The stranger complied, but said nothing till they got home, when,

throwing off the cloak, his own wife was discovered to his astonished eyes, and this story is now a standing joke with the neighbours.

It was amusing, too, to see them on a wet night in the summer lambing season, with perhaps thirty or forty lambs in the "cook-house" at once, feeding the little helpless creatures with tea or coffee, so that they might be kept alive till morning, or till the weather moderated. They were so anxious to get on, too, that neither of them spared any work whatever, necessary or unnecessary, that they thought would give them the competency they strove for even a day sooner, so that they might the more quickly get back to Scotland, and to their old friends again.

The society in the "camp" was, as a rule, rough in the extreme. Such men as "Tom the devil," "Flat-footed Jack," and many more kindred worthies were the men the farmers were often forced to employ, because better men were not to be had, and property was by no means secure. Horse, cattle, and sheep-stealing was rather common than otherwise; and we had all to keep a very sharp look-out, and to have our weather-eyes open continually. Policemen were unknown in the "camp." I have known people who saw them once or twice, but for myself I never saw one all the time I was in the country. I saw, too, that fortunes were not so easily made as people at home imagined, and that one or two bad years would sweep away the gainings of many years; and that even, should I be successful, perhaps, after fifteen or twenty years, I should be unfitted then for civilised enjoyments. I found that I could not give up for ever the society of congenial minds, and I could not bear the thought of being buried for life on this almost unknown land. Just as I was debating with myself whether to stay or to emigrate to some more congenial country, I received word from home which necessitated my presence there, and I left the "camp" towards the end of March for Buenos Ayres, where I remained for the greater part of the next month, and I saw all the grand and imposing spectacles of the Roman Catholic Churches during holy week. The city is handsome, built in regular squares, and many of the houses faced with white marble, and they have all a gay and brilliant appearance. The "plázas," too, ornamented with statues and trees, give a rich and ornamental effect to the city; and the clear, deep, blue sky above, the bright, semi-tropical sun overhead, and the broad river skirting the city, studded with ships from every land, make up a *coup d'œil* exceedingly beautiful. I was obliged, while waiting on a ship, to pass some time in the city, and while there I enjoyed the hospitality of an old townsman, whose kindness I shall never forget, and upon whom I had no claim whatever.

Towards the end of April I left for Liverpool, and had a most delicious voyage home. We called in at Monte Video, Rio de

Janeiro, Bahia, Maseo, Pernambuco, and St. Vincent, sailing through the Cape de Verd Islands ; and I managed to get nearly three days on shore at Lisbon. We reached Liverpool, after a forty-six days' voyage, and one of the most pleasant, I think, it is possible to take, after which I left for Scotland ; and now, while working at my old routine labours, I look back on my trip to Buenos Ayres almost as if it were but a vivid dream.

NOTES FROM AN OLD MAID'S DIARY

IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.

MR. RAVEN had now been our inmate for three months, and engaged to Fanny for six weeks. Mr. Green had not been to Rose Cottage since that last event, being engaged in the country, but he was daily expected. On an occasion when I paid my monthly instalment to good old Mrs. Green, it accidentally transpired that she was very short of ready money. She received my little contribution to her *menage* most gratefully, owning that, beyond the £5 paid on the Bedfords' account, Mr. Raven had never troubled himself about money matters, or even refunded occasional shillings he had borrowed of "dear mother," when he had no change about him. Such a proceeding was so contrary to the business view with which I had been taught to look on pecuniary transactions, that it somewhat lowered Mr. Raven in my estimation, the more so as I knew he was perfectly aware of Mrs. Green's straightened circumstances. It was, to say the least, an unpardonable want of thought. I strongly advised Mrs. Green to speak openly to him, and tell him that her tradespeople's bills required settling, and ask him to give her the amount due to her. But the old lady could not make up her mind to this step, nor risk affronting him, under the circumstances of his engagement with her grand-daughter. If there should be any hitch, she should never forgive herself.

"Samuel would soon come, and then, perhaps, some time would be fixed for the marriage. But," added Mrs. Green, "I can't for the life of me think when his new work will come out; for he does not write at night—I am sure he has not burnt out one candle during the week. I suppose love turns the brains of young and old, authors and all alike." Fanny's dress was not of the newest fashion or quality. The poor child felt her shabby appearance. True, on her engagement, her aunt had consented to procure her two new dresses, but they were simple inexpensive muslins, which, by constant wear, soon lost their new appearance, and she felt she did not dress as well as she wished. She was so candid by nature that she concealed nothing from her lover, and she imparted to him her regret at not being better attired. He replied that it was her mind and not her outward appearance that had attracted him. Still, he could understand that it added somewhat to a woman's self-respect to be well dressed, and that before he introduced her to his family he certainly should take care she was suitably provided with clothes. "At present,

dear Fanny," he continued, "you know I have my reasons for keeping you to myself, though I can quite imagine that you will create no little sensation when you are presented as Charles Raven's bride elect." Fanny seemed to think the sooner that event came off the better.

The day after this conversation, Mr. Raven went out before breakfast, and did not return until late in the evening. He brought with him a large parcel, which, in the course of the evening, he opened, and drew forth a splendid flounced silk dress, with the skirt ready made, a black velvet cloak, and six pairs of kid gloves. These he presented to Fanny, telling her she would also receive a new bonnet in a few days, as he had asked his sister to order one at her milliner's. Never was a girl more enchanted with her presents, she was childish with delight. The dress was soon completed, and then came the question, when should she first wear her new attire? Mr. Raven promised to take her to a promenade concert at the Crystal Palace the following Saturday, provided the bonnet arrived in time. Fanny was up early, all excitement. They must start at ten o'clock at latest, to catch the train, and they watched eagerly until that time, but no bonnet arrived. The poor girl almost cried; Mr. Raven seemed provoked, and said, "Never mind, let her put on her old one, they could get one *en route*; but he could not bear she should be disappointed," and they started. About an hour later, a milliner's box arrived with the bonnet, addressed "Miss Green, Rose Cottage, Bayswater." What was to be done? The bill accompanied it; the boy had orders not to leave the bonnet without receiving the money. Mrs. Green had not the change, £1 2s. 6d. It was an Oxford-street milliner, three miles off. She asked me to kindly lend the money. I did so; but at the same time Mrs. Bedford's loan crossed my mind. I had never been repaid that. Should I get this again? So the boy left the bonnet, which was a pretty white silk, with pink roses.

It was late at night, nearly twelve o'clock, when the young couple came home. Mrs. Green was getting very fidgety. Fanny entered flushed and excited; Mr. Raven as cool and quiet as possible. "Whatever can have made you so late, Charles," asked Mrs. Green, somewhat sharply, "I really thought you would have been back hours ago. It is hardly the thing for so young a girl as Fanny to be without a *chaperone* of an evening. Was the Palace crowded?" "I fear, by your tone," replied the gentleman, "that I am in disgrace. The fact is, we have not been at all to Sydenham. We lost our train, and knew we must miss the concert. The next was a Brighton one, so Fanny and myself took it into our heads to have a peep of the sea; and we have been to Brighton and back and enjoyed the evening there."

To Brighton! We all looked aghast! But it was too late to

discuss the subject that night. Fanny was dreadfully tired, and went off to bed with her aunt. The next day she gave us an account of the expedition. It appeared that Mr. Raven had been met by a friend on the platform, who had tapped him familiarly on the shoulder, and presented him with a printed paper, asking him where he was now living. She added that Charles had seemed very much vexed, and told her it was one of those disagreeable fellows who would always claim acquaintance with him, however much he tried to shake him off. Moreover, he was sure if they went to Sydenham they should be pestered with him all day. Then he saw another friend on the platform, a real friend; and it was such fun to see how they got rid of the gentleman—a kind of freemasonry, she looked on it all—for Charles no sooner gave a peculiar kind of low whistle than this last gentleman came up and began talking to the first one. Charles, she supposed, went to get the tickets, for she missed him just as the Brighton train came up. The nice gentleman put her into a carriage, and said Charles would be with her directly. But before he had time to get in, the train went off, and she was in such a fright until it stopped at the next station, when we can fancy her delight to see the door open and Charles get in. He said it was nearly up with him, and though he was left behind, he had run along the platform and pressed in with the guard, who knew him well. So now they should have a pleasant day together. At Brighton, Mr. Raven had met several friends and some cousins. One, a very nice lady, was splendidly dressed. "Was it not fortunate, aunt, I had on my new silk dress?" They had dined with this lady and her husband and two brothers at a beautiful house; and after enjoying themselves by the sea, had taken the ten p.m. train back. We asked her the name of the lady, but she said she did not know it. Then we showed her the new bonnet, with which she was delighted. She certainly looked very pretty in it. It was an awkward thing to ask Mr. Raven for the money, but I told him I had paid for it. He said, "Oh, there must be some mistake, Miss Linley; I hope really you have not done so, for I paid in advance for it. What a set of rogues there are in the world! Now that will just cost me a journey to Oxford-street to receive back your money. Another time, pray do not trouble yourself to listen to such impositions. It is most annoying!" I had never seen Mr. Raven look so put out before, and as he seemed to blame me, I did not like to press him for the money; but I thought he might as well have paid me, and receive the amount himself afterwards, and fully determined it should be the last time I would be so free with my cash.

By the evening Mr. Raven seemed to have got over the annoyance and recovered his temper. He apologised for not having had

time to go to Oxford-street about the bill; he should, however, take the earliest opportunity of doing so. While he was reading the newspaper to himself that evening, something or other tickled his fancy so that he laughed aloud. Fanny was very curious and anxious to know what amused him. He said he was entertained by an extraordinary case of shoplifting. The account was most amusing. A lady contrived to secrete a quantity of articles while she was being waited on, and though the shopman missed them, he could not detect how they disappeared, yet his suspicions were so aroused that the person was followed and given in charge. Who or where were her accomplices did not appear, but only one of the many stolen articles, among which were two dresses, a cloak, &c., were found on her person. The remainder, which the shopman swore to her having been taken, were not forthcoming. Mr. Raven seemed much entertained, and enlarged on the fashion of crinoline, which he said he suspected had to answer for many such occurrences.

From the day of her expedition to Brighton a change came over Fanny. She was unsettled, and independent to a degree. Neither her grandmother or aunt appeared to have any influence over her. They did not approve of her going out to evening entertainments, as she now constantly did alone with Mr. Raven. But there was always some plausible pretext alleged. She had also many presents of dress given her for particular occasions, as she would not listen to any advice from us; therefore we were all very pleased at the prospect of her father's arrival, feeling that until she married it was but right so young a girl should be under more control. Mr. Raven certainly was as agreeable as ever to each of us individually, though I candidly own my faith in his judgment was shaken, for he must have seen that Mrs. Green was not quite satisfied with Fanny's conduct. Yet he never checked her saucy replies, or persuaded her to yield to her grandmother's wishes. Besides, I felt convinced that his work, as he called it, and for which he had come into seclusion, did not advance; for I had been curious enough to satisfy myself as to the amount of candle burnt at night, and certainly during the day his time was otherwise occupied. It was very well, no doubt, to be in love, but love-making all day scarcely suited an author's dignity—at least, so I thought; but Fanny told me I was an old maid who knew nothing about such matters, and thus I was silenced. On Mr. Samuel Green's arrival his mother had a long conversation with him respecting Fanny's prospects. She spoke in the highest terms of Mr. Raven's talents and character. Said she considered him one of the most amiable of men. That his liberality to Fanny had been unbounded; for not only had he provided her with very handsome articles of dress, but last week had brought her some valuable trinkets, among others a set of remarkable pink

topaz. They had, he said, belonged to his mother, but he had lately had them reset for Fanny. She also wore on her engaged finger a valuable diamond ring, of course also a present from Mr. Raven. At the same time Mrs. Green said she was not quite satisfied that it was the right thing for Fanny to be out so much alone with Mr. Raven, especially of an evening, and that she should be more pleased if, instead of taking her to places of public amusement, he introduced her to some of his many friends. Mr. Green seemed to think so to, and said it was rather peculiar, his fatherly pride in Fanny deeming her fit for any society, and a girl no one need be ashamed of. Mrs. Green then said there might be some cause, and gave her son Mr. Raven's asserted reasons for privacy. She also mentioned that he had paid a portion of Captain Bedford's debt, and hesitatingly added (for, dear old soul, she did not like any slight suspicion on her part to colour Mr. Green's views), that though he was certainly in her debt, she thought he would soon settle with her; at any rate, it would be a preparatory and wise step for her son to sound him as to his prospects in regard to his daughter's future, and also when he proposed to marry. Here Mr. Green had a somewhat difficult part to play; for if we let our readers behind the scenes, he had not sixpence he could call his own; and had Mr. Raven chosen to inquire into the antecedents of his future father-in-law, it is to be feared the inquiry would not have elicited very satisfactory results. In plain words, Mr. Green was one of those spendthrift *vaut rien* fellows who hang on society, contriving to live at the expense of their fellow-creatures by feeding their vanity and conducing to their pleasures in making themselves useful in their daily round of amusements. All this, of course, must be kept back from Mr. Raven, as it was important to Mr. Green that his daughter should marry well. By his mother's account, the match was a desirable one, that is, if the gentleman proved to be all he was represented. Fanny once well settled, there would be another *home* open for him; so everything recommended caution on his part to work out his plan and to play the important role of a prudent father. On the day of Mr. Green's arrival, Mr. Raven had gone out early. He was generally very punctual, and not having intimated that he might be detained, when six o'clock came we waited more than hour for him before we sat down to our meal. This quite put out Mr. Green, who looked on it, he said, as a mark of disrespect towards him; whereupon Fanny fired up in her lover's defence, and received a sharp reproof from her father for her pertness. At half-past nine o'clock Mr. Raven came in. He shook hands warmly with Mr. Green, and then, turning to Mrs. Green, apologised in the politest manner for not being in at dinner. "The fact, dear mother," he said, "was that at half-past five I started

from my club to return home, but just as I got into Park-lane, Sir Lytton Bulwer spied me, and stopping his brougham, insisted on my going back with him to dine, as he had a MS. he wanted to show me. I think I told you I often revise his works for him ere they go to press. Well, you see, I could not refuse to go with him under the circumstances. But I left as early as I could, knowing Mr. Green was to be here to-day; and though I must devote a few hours to-night to complete some work I promised to get through for Sir Lytton, I therefore hope to-morrow I shall have time to give to you, sir," and he turned as he spoke to Mr. Green.

The following day, after breakfast, the two gentlemen were closetted together for some time. Old Mrs. Green was present at their colloquy, for when she would have retired Mr. Raven had entreated her to remain. He was sure neither Mr. Green nor himself had any secrets from their dear mother. Elated at all that transpired, and which only raised Mr. Raven in their eyes, Mrs. Green soon after imparted to me as nearly as possible what passed. Mr. Green had opened the ball by saying his love for his dear child made him feel how desirous it was, before her affections were irrevocably engaged, to request Mr. Raven to inform him what were in reality his prospects in life. Her son, Mrs. Green said, grew a little too patronising, she thought, in his tone, saying he thought Green was one who highly appreciated talent and literary pursuits, but that he owned authorship was a somewhat better profession than formerly, when men of the greatest merit, wrote, lived, and died in garrets. Still, if Mr. Raven depended alone upon his brain for his bread, it was a most uncertain provision. Illness or other casualties might intervene and poverty ensue. Mr. Green felt he ought to have demanded the present interview some weeks previously—when he was first made acquainted with his addresses to Fanny, and should have done so, but being much engaged at a distance, he had trusted to his mother's representation, and he had let things take their course. Now, however, the time was come for Mr. Raven to state frankly what his income was; also to give some account of his family connections, and how soon he intended to marry. Mr. Raven replied in the mildest yet most dignified tone. "It was," he said, "most natural that Mr. Green should desire to satisfy himself as to his position, and had he not been able in a straightforward manner to meet all questions relative to his family and prospects, he should not have aspired to his daughter's hand." When first he had been received at Mrs. Green's hospitable board merely as a visitor, it required little penetration to see that, though that estimable lady's position in life had, from unfortunate circumstances been somewhat changed, and though her establishment was reduced, yet she brought with her into narrower circum-

stances a dignity and refinement that bespoke her birth and education ; while, curiously enough, the crest on one or two pieces of family plate in use proved that the Green family must have been connected, during the last century, with a branch of his own. He himself was the second son of the Ravens, of Raven Court, ——shire. His elder brother had a peculiar taste for exploring foreign parts, and was now, he believed, in Central Africa. He was very eccentric, and for years the family had heard but little of him ; in fact, they should hardly know of his existence, save from the reports which reached them from other travellers of his daring exploits—exploits which, however they might eventually add to his fame or benefit the world, certainly endangered his life. He (Mr. Raven) would be most frank with Mr. Green, and tell him candidly he was not on the best terms with his father, and had not visited Raven Court for some years. The nature of the misunderstanding rested entirely with his father's second wife. Mrs. Raven had a violent temper, and was a woman of no education, and on his last visit had rendered his father's house most unpleasant to him. One scene he had with her—when, in her anger at some trivial remark he made, she had positively torn up a valuable MS. he was engaged in writing—had occasioned words, not only with her, but with his father, and he had resolved never to return home during his step-mother's life. He was entitled at his father's death to £6,000 from his mother's settlement, in which his father had a life interest. He did not know more than Mr. Green did what property his father had to leave. The estate was considered worth £1,800 a-year, but was, of course, entailed on his brother. Then he inherited from his aunt, his mother's sister, Mrs. C——, on the death of her husband, the reversion of a house, No. —, in Kensington Palace Gardens. The old gentleman, his uncle by marriage, was over eighty, and in his dotage, and though he did not like to calculate beforehand on his death, still it was a valuable property even if he chose to sell the reversion during his life. This, however, he should not do, nor could he afford to live there if it fell in ; but he proposed to take a moderate-sized house in some part of Belgravia, which Fanny could furnish according to her own taste. Mr. Raven could not name, nor could he exactly know what income he derived from his literary pursuits. Suffice it to say it was considerable and increasing. "Adam Bede" alone was in its sixth edition, and his following works seemed likely to have quite as good a run ; but he had other means from which he drew his resources besides his pen. Until Mr. Raven had seen Mr. Green he had not liked to hasten matters ; but now, as far as he could see, his present work would be completed in about three months, during which time, for reasons associated with the work, he must request that his privacy might still be respected, and his

address kept secret. Then there would no longer any reason for delay, and he hoped Mr. Green would consent to give him his daughter at once. Mr. Raven then proceeded to say, that as they were on the subject, might he, without offence, intimate that, when once established in his own house in London, and he had his friends about him, it would not be quite in accordance with his position that dear Mrs. Green should continue to receive boarders as now. He honoured her exceedingly for endeavouring thus to repair her broken fortune by increasing her income. Yet there was no knowing who she might get in her house, and with her unsuspicious nature she might admit people like the Bedfords, for instance, who, instead of remunerating her for all her cares, would bring trouble and unforeseen expense, or even worse ; for so deeply were the schemes of adventurers laid it was difficult to cope with them. However, he had a little prospective plan to propose which he hoped might be agreeable to all parties. Dear Fanny had often expressed a wish to travel, and he intended after their marriage to spend some time on the Continent. During that period, if Mrs. Green and Emma, her daughter, would kindly inhabit the house he should take, and supervise the establishment, he and Fanny could return at any time, and feel they had a home ready to receive them. Of course, he added, he should leave a sum at his bankers in Mrs. Green's name, on which they could draw for the expenses they incurred on his behalf. As to references, if Mr. Green wished he could apply to his solicitor or his publishers.

Mr. Green had been taking in as fast as he could follow the history of his son-in-law elect, and the prospect detailed. There was nothing he could cavil at, but before he had time to make an observation, or form a question, Mr. Raven turned on him, and in the most gentlemanly manner, said : " My dear sir, I have been open with you ; may I, on my side, now ask you what settlement you are prepared to make on your daughter ? Doubtless, with your talents, you have ere this realised an independence, for I believe, from what I have learnt from dear mother, that you are not following any profession ; and yet I hear you are mixing in good society, and are fond of hunting, shooting, and other gentlemanly pursuits." Mr. Green was for the moment rather taken aback, but his ready wit and quickness did not forsake him. " You are quite right, Mr. Raven," he said, " in your turn, to make any inquiries you like. My own history is told in a few words. My father was a country squire and, as you justly observe, dear mother carries in herself a certificate of what her former position and family must have been. An open-handed hospitality, which knew no limit, and through which our house was daily filled with the surrounding county families ; a pack of hounds, a good cellar, and consequent expenses,

diminished little by little my father's once well-filled purse; for notwithstanding my mother's entreaties, his pride forbade his drawing in his expenses, or making any reduction in his establishment. The consequences were that the estate became involved, and at his death I, who had been brought up in expectation of inheriting my father's fortune and position in the county, found myself in the most embarrassed circumstances. On examination into the affairs, I discovered that, after liquidating all claims, there was but a bare maintenance left for my dear mother and sister. (Mr. Green did not think it necessary to state how he had reduced that pittance by the constant applications he had made on it.) "But," continued he, "my wife had fortunately a small settlement, on which, until I had the misfortune to lose her a few years after, we lived. It was, I felt, too late for me to be called to the Bar; in fact, my education had not fitted me for mental work, my acquirements lay rather in farming and field sports. So I accepted at first an agency, but the restraints of business did not quite suit me; so I gave that up." Here let me observe that Mr. Green's account did not exactly tally with what I had heard, namely, that his employers gave him up, having lost considerably by the carelessness with which he had overlooked the estate, managed the accounts, and altogether neglected the duties involved in the situation. Mr. Green, however, continued his history. "I had in youth," he said, "been afflicted with stammering, from which impediment of speech I had, with some perseverance, cured myself. I now determined to turn this self-acquired knowledge to account. Being on intimate footing with many families among the aristocracy, I no sooner notified my intentions among my friends than I had many cases to attend professionally. Impediments of a similar nature to my own were quickly confided to my care, and I was generally invited to visit at the homes of my patients during my treatment. The cure was rarely effected under three or four months; my fee for a complete cure was 200 guineas, while I usually refused to accept any remuneration unless the parties were satisfied I had succeeded. You would be astonished, my dear sir, if you knew how many of our members of Parliament owe their fame for elocution to my humble endeavours in their behalf. There is Lord S——, and the Marquis of R——. Now I really almost gave up all hope of making anything of them, but perseverance triumphed in the end. The best is that all these fellows are so grateful, they can't make enough of me; whilst I have a room at their houses, called Green's room, always ready for me when I like to go, and capital hunting, fishing, and shooting if I feel disposed, and it is really a jolly life."

"Then Fanny, I suppose, inherits her mother's settlement?" said Mr. Raven, quietly, without making any comment on Mr. Green's

boast of his aristocratic friendships, "or have you a life interest in it?" "For a moment," said Mrs. Green, "I thought Samuel looked blank, but he soon recovered himself, and boldly met the question. 'Fanny,' he said, 'inherits at my death, by legal right, all her mother's fortune,' but I felt," said Mrs. Green, "it was very wrong to deceive Charles, for his wife hadn't a penny, at least, not that I ever heard of." "Pray, Mr. Green, what amount of money may that settlement embody?" said Mr. Raven, "and in what securities is it funded? Oh! it is very little," replied Mr. Green, when thus posed turning off the question, "scarcely worth thinking about, and bursting into a hearty laugh. I have little faith in anything being secure, and don't think I look much like a dying man yet; do I?" "I trust sincerely, dear sir," replied Mr. Raven, "that you will live many years to benefit the House of Commons, and society in general, by your professional services. Doubtless, among your noble friends, there must be many appointments open to you. In fact, when I tire of authorship, and am reduced to the garret lodging you alluded to, and in which so many of my predecessors have lived and died, I may hope you will give me a lift." "This," said Mrs. Green, "was said with a touch of sarcasm, and I felt that he, who is so clever, had seen through Samuel's little fibs. And then Mr. Raven told my son, so grandly and yet so independently, that although, from what he gathered, her father would make her no allowance now, and her expectations were much less than he had hoped from what he had heard of Mr. Green's position, yet his love for dear Fanny was so strong and deep that he was willing to take her for herself alone, without a sixpence, while he trusted none of the family would regret his advent among them. Now it would have been very much better," said the old lady, "to have ended the interview here; but Samuel was so foolish, and would appear so patronising about Fanny, that had not Mr. Raven been a most thorough gentleman, I am sure there would have been a scene. And at last—oh! you may imagine how annoyed I was—Samuel told Mr. Raven that, as they were on the subject of money matters, perhaps he would settle his little account with me, for that it had gone on long enough. Well, my dear, I was ready to faint for fear Charles should be offended at Samuel's tone; but no; the dear fellow came and took my hand in his, and pressed it so kindly! 'Mother, dear,' he said, 'I must thank Mr. Green for reminding me of my forgetfulness. We poor authors, you see, are apt to live a little in the clouds. Have I really been four months with you? Why, it seems but the other day since I came, so charmingly has the time passed. I am such a careless fellow about money matters that I allow the publishers to go on year after year in my debt, without troubling them to settle up scores. But I feel quite

ashamed of myself. The fact is, you manage all maternal matters so well that I forget the needs-be of the £. s. d. system ; but I will go to the City this week, and get the wherewithal to liquidate my debt—at least, in one way ; that of gratitude for your kindness and motherly love for me can never be paid.' This pretty speech ended the conference, leaving an agreeable impression on all parties."

For the next few evenings Mr. Raven was very busy writing in his room. We could hear him up and down half the night, and Fanny had only a few hours of his time. He 'wanted to finish something to take with him to the publishers, and save two journeys,' he said. In the meantime we had quite a little disturbance in the house. Among Mrs. Green's remnants of better days she had a handsome silver salver, which had been presented to her husband in recollection of some hunting exploit. This was only used on special occasions, but, when wanted one day, was not forthcoming. In great distress, Mrs. Green searched in every corner, but without success. There could be no doubt it must have been stolen, and that immediate measures ought to be taken to discover the thief. Fanny ran up, in a state of excitement, to beg Mr. Raven would come down, and advise them how to act. That gentleman looked very serious when he heard of the loss, suggested and advised that we should remain quiet about it while he took his hat and went to the police station, returning soon after with one of the inspectors. This official proceeded to take down a description of the missing article, and all particulars that could be given about it. The salver, it appeared, had not been used for more than a month. The little maid was sent for and cross-questioned. The poor girl was in a state of alarm, and declared she knew nothing whatever about it. The last time she had seen it was the day after that evening party we had. Miss Fanny had been helping her to clean the plate ; and she dare say Mr. Raven would remember—for he came down and helped Miss Fanny—that the waiter was lying on the meat-scales, and that either he or Miss Fanny—she could not remember which—knocked it, so that it fell down ; and then Miss Fanny or Mr. Raven picked it up, and put it on the scales, and weighed it in fun, and then Miss Fanny did it up in the green-baize bag again—that was the last she saw of it, as true as her name was Mary Fox ! No cross-questioning could elicit more. Miss Fanny was then called, and also remembered the incident of seeing it weighed, but declared that her aunt had put the salver away, with the rest of the plate, in the box where it was always kept, in her own room. Miss Green also remembered this, and also that Mr. Raven had very good-naturedly helped to carry the things upstairs for her. The inspector took down all these

statements, and left, promising to do all he could to trace the lost property. And there we had to leave it, as is generally the case in such matters, though the subject afforded us much conjecture and excitement for some days. Mr. Raven, who exhibited a warm interest in Mrs. Green's loss, took many fruitless journeys to the police-station; but the police failed to trace the salver, or detect the offender; so poor Mrs. Green had to submit to the loss. The only person we could suspect was a charwoman who had been engaged to help Mary, the servant, the day after the party for which the waiter had been last in use.

At last Mr. Raven finished the work he had in hand, and, taking his many pages of manuscript, was absent a whole day on business matters. On his return he had a little interview with Mrs. Green, and then and there paid her £15, on account of what was due to her, in gold, thereby restoring full confidence in him; the remaining balance, he said, should follow in a few days. Now that he had had his attention called to the £ s. d. question, he found he had many little bills to settle, and it would take some time to collect them all in, on one side, and disburse them on the other. He, however, paid me for the bonnet, with a thousand apologies for having left it so long unnoticed. Everything now went on, for a time, very smoothly. Mr. Green paid us occasional visits, but I could not help observing that the two gentlemen, when they did meet, always seemed to fight shy of one another. Mr. Raven had evidently seen through Mr. Green's character, and while, as the father of Fanny, the latter was polite to her betrothed, there was no cordiality or confidence on either side.

At this period our party was augmented by some friends of my own, who, by Mrs. Green's permission, I invited to spend a month with us. Mr. Raven volunteered to accommodate by giving up his room, and occupying for that time a spare attic. I would not hear of this at first, but he pressed our acquiescence to the arrangement. He could, he said, turn in anywhere, and sleep on a sofa, if needs be. My cousin was a clergyman from the country, who, with his wife, were coming to town, and made a very pleasant addition to our party. Of course Mr. Raven was introduced as a particular friend, therefore they were quite ready to give him the right hand of fellowship, and the two gentlemen were soon on intimate terms. One request Mr. Raven had made before Mr. Waters (my cousin) arrived, was, that as he still wrote under the feigned name of George Eliot, he particularly hoped we would not divulge that he was the author of the works published under that name. Mr. Waters was a man of entertaining powers, and as "iron sharpeneth iron," so his conversation seemed to invite Mr. Raven to vie with him in anecdote and repartee; and we heard

much more of his travels than had ever before transpired ; in fact it seemed wonderful how much of the globe he had seen. Several of the parties named in Mr. Waters' acquaintance abroad, Mr. Raven knew, he said, especially the bankers at Vienna and Dresden, to whom he had lately given a friend letters of introduction. We now frequently made little parties to the theatre, Mr. Raven more than once securing us a box, being very glad that his knowledge of some people enabled him to oblige Mr. and Mrs. Waters. Many were the anecdotes he told of Young, the Kembles, and other dramatic friends—he said he proudly called them such—then the actors of the day. At first the Waters' seemed quite as much taken with Mr. Raven as we had all been. My sojourn at Rose Cottage was now so pleasant, that I congratulated myself on the quarters I had fallen into. Oh ! what entertaining evenings we had ! Every imaginable topic was discussed, and I obtained an insight into many questions, both in foreign and domestic politics, art, science, and general information, which gratified my thirst for improvement. Lighter subjects too, we often talked of. I remember, at this time, we recounted to Mr. Waters the loss of the salver, and he gave us an account of a very extraordinary burglary which had been cleverly carried out in a house where he had been staying. "Aye !" said Mr. Raven, "I can tell you a better story still, though possibly you may have seen the account in the papers. Some few years since I happened to be at A——'s, the great jewellers, one day, when up drove a brougham, and a gentleman came in and asked to see one of the firm. Mr. A—— came forward immediately. I was selecting some trinkets for a lady at the time, and remained at the counter. Well, the gentleman began his business by stating that he had been intending to call every day for the last week, to see Mr. A——, having been strongly recommended by his friend, Sir M. P——, but he had been so busy that until now he had not had time. The fact was he wanted to give an order for a large service of plate, to take down with him to his country seat, as he was going the next week to entertain Lord Palmerston and some other political gentlemen, who were to be present at a meeting to be held in Birmingham. Mr. A—— bowed low. 'Well,' he said, 'Mr. A——, I dare say you are obliged to be particular as to references for such an order as I am prepared to give, and quite right too, considering what a set of sharpers there are in the world, though I don't think, if you knew me, you would fear. However, here is my card—Lieutenant-Colonel Spence, I live at Irgwell Court, near Birmingham ; my bankers are Attwood, Spooner and Co. You can, if you please, send over to Brooks's Club—I have belonged to it for the last twenty years, or I can refer you to some friend—Lord Palmerston, or anybody you like who is in town. Stay, here

is a note to me from Mr. B——, the member for B——. Now the question is, can you accommodate me with what I want immediately? I should like to take what you have ready at once with me, leaving the remainder of the order to follow; or must I go elsewhere? for,' taking out his watch, 'my train starts at seven p.m., and I should prefer taking it with me.' Mr. A—— again bowed low as the colonel handed to him a list of the plate required. 'Yes, sir,' he said, when he had read it over, 'I think we have all these articles in stock, and we will have them packed and invoiced at once. We know Mr. B——, the member for B——; perhaps we shall find him at Brooks's.' 'Well, then, Mr. A——, I will return with my valet in an hour, to save time. If you don't find Mr. B—— at Brooks's, as, of course, you would not be such a fool as to let me have the goods unless you got a reference—I know, in your place, I should not—perhaps you]would let one of your young men go down to Digwell Court with the plate with my servant, who is not the brightest specimen, though he is as honest as the day. I will pay all his expenses. Let me see—this is Saturday; he can be back early on Monday, and a breath of country air will do him no harm. Only the plate is needed at once, to be used on Monday.' Mr. A—— acquiesced; and no sooner was Colonel Spence gone than he set to work to select the silver required, sending out a clerk to Brooks's. This emissary returned to say that Mr. C—— had been there, but had left an hour since. 'Well, then, Sampson,' said Mr. A——, turning to a more elderly assistant, 'it will save all trouble if you will undertake the job. Your friends live near Birmingham, don't they?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Well, then, see that the plate is packed according to the list, and be ready by six o'clock to start with Colonel Spence when he comes.'

As a listener, I had been interested in the arrangements, and curiosity determined me to have another peep of Colonel Spence. I can't tell why, but there was something made me wonder whether, after all, Mr. A—— would let him have the plate. I told the man who was serving me that I must keep an appointment, and would return in a short time to complete my purchases; and contrived to re-enter the shop a little before the clock showed the hour of half-past six—just, indeed, as the object of my curiosity, Colonel Spence, drove up in his brougham. He and his servant both got out, and the colonel said, 'Well, Mr. A——, all right, I suppose?' as he entered the shop. 'We have not too much time; I hope all is ready. Ah!' he continued, as he saw Mr. A——'s confidential clerk standing with his railway rug over his arm, leaning against the packed box on the counter, 'so you have decided to send your man—much the safest way. Now, then, ^{Mr.}Hobson, open the brougham-door!' At ^{this} juncture, two policemen entered the

shop, and on seeing them the colonel turned very pale! 'Ah! my good colonel, we have caught you at last, have we!' said one. 'A nice dodge you have given us, too!' added the other. 'Why we were down in Birmingham last week after you, and thought we had found your track.' Then, seeing the packed box of plate, 'I dare say, now, you have persuaded Mr. A—— to let you have a little of his property.' Mr. A—— looked alarmed. 'Yes, sir,' said the head policeman, 'this colonel is a first-rate hand at this kind of thing. Doubtless he has persuaded you he is the owner of Digwell Court, and is a friend of Lord Palmerston's, and others of the nobility. We have heard no end of stories about his friends, who rank among the highest in the land, and no doubt he has favoured you with the usual warnings against trusting any gentleman who came without references. We know all about him. Well, Mr. Colonel, you must now come with us to the station-house, instead of starting for Digwell Court.' The supposed colonel, looking, as you may suppose, very crestfallen, and losing all his high-toned assumption, suffered himself to be led off. Hardly, however, had the policemen got outside the door with their prisoner then one of them returned, and respectfully touching his hat to Mr. A——, said, 'I think, sir, as our man was nabbed in the act of committing a fresh plunder on you, we must ask you to further the ends of justice by allowing your clerk to accompany us to the station, with the box of goods you were on the point of trusting him with. It will be easiest to convict him on this last offence.' 'By all means,' said Mr. A——, who was only just recovering from the utter surprise and alarm into which he had been thrown by the boldness of the attempted theft. 'By all means. Mr. Sampson, will you accompany these officers, and you can prosecute in my name?' So saying, Mr. Sampson lifted the heavy box, and carried it, with the assistance of the policeman, to a cab, in which the prisoner and his other captor were waiting. 'Jump in, Mr. Sampson,' said his companion, 'and I will get up outside; but we had best put the box inside; we shall not be long on our road.' Mr. Sampson took his seat by the side of his charge, and the party started. They had not proceeded far round the corner of the street when the head policeman inquired—'Have you brought the invoice and the list, as we shall want them especially to prove the order.' 'No, I have not,' replied Mr. Sampson, who had got quite excited in the matter? 'I left them in an envelope on the counter.' 'Shall I go for them?' said the officer, 'I shall be back in a minute, and it would be tiresome to delay proceedings for want of them.' 'I know best where to find them,' replied Mr. Sampson; and so saying, after shouting to stop the cab, he opened the door, jumped out, and hurried back to the shop, not twenty doors off.

The minute the clerk was gone the driver watched him round the corner, then whipped on his horse, and was out of sight in a moment. When Mr. Sampson returned with his invoice, the party were not to be seen. He flew back to Mr. A——, who, immediately alarmed and suspicious, called in other police. Suffice it to say the whole act had been a cleverly devised robbery—the colonel, his valet, the men disguised as policemen, and the cab-driver, all in league in an arranged plan of action ; a set of professional sharpers who so cleverly carried out their scheme that they made clean off with their booty.

“Now, was not that a clever trick?” said Mr. Raven.

We had all been quite interested, so vividly did he describe the scene. This tale led to others of a similar character, until at last Mrs. Waters said she could almost have fancied Mr. Raven had been a principal actor in the dramas he described so well ; had he witnessed them? “Where,” said Mr. Waters, “had he picked up his knowledge?”

Days went by, and Fanny's approaching marriage became more generally talked of. Good old Mrs. Green made sundry purchases in linen, as a first instalment of the modest trousseau she hoped to procure for her granddaughter ; whilst, to save expense, Miss Green and myself plied our needles on the young lady's behalf. I cannot say that her lover's desire that she should encourage and exercise domestic habits seemed likely to be fulfilled. Instead of helping her grandmother's preparations she would idle about the house, reading novels, or strumming upon the piano. I had never much admired Miss Fanny's character. The importance she was now made also did not improve her, to my mind. However, if not for her own sake, I was very glad to return some of Mrs. Green's really kind attention to my comforts by giving her a little of my spare time. The marriage was talked of for an early day in the next month. Mr. Raven said he had long wished to visit Madeira, and he really thought it would be a good plan to go there for the honeymoon, and spend the winter months. Still, he intended to take his London house as he had at first proposed. He had not seen one he liked. So, as time was wearing away, it would be best to look out for a ready-furnished one. After all, it saved trouble, and Fanny could always add anything she fancied when they returned to England. Mrs. Green had suffered so much from bronchitis that, if the winter was severe, he hoped she would join them at Madeira, and thus avoid the March winds. The old lady shook her head, but did not object to the suggestion. What, I thought, if these plans are carried out, is to become of me? Mr. Raven does not take my future at all into consideration. I told him so one day. “My dear Miss Linley,” he said, “we all look on you as one of us. Of

course you will either remain in my house with Miss Green, or—stay—why should you not come out to Madeira with Mrs. Green? She will be very glad to have your company for the voyage, and I am sure Fanny and myself will be delighted to give you a warm welcome for as long as we are there, and then, you know, ‘sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’ I have my own ideas that Miss Linley will not be Miss Linley long, if thrown into that society into which I hope soon to introduce her, and in which her talents and acquirements will make her an ornament.” One thing struck my Cousin Waters as very strange, and he confided his ideas to me. He owned he did not quite understand Mr. Raven’s closeness about his personal friends. “You will hardly believe,” he said, “that Mr. Raven this morning actually asked me to perform the marriage ceremony. Now, of course, he must have many old friends who would be more entitled to do him this service than an acquaintance of a few weeks. As to his flattery, that he has seldom seen a clergyman in whom he has such confidence, or to whom he has taken such a fancy, really it looks like gammon, I think. A very pleasant fellow he is, I do not deny, and as clever a hand at telling a story as I know anywhere; but to ask me to marry him on a few weeks’ intimacy looks as if he was harder up for friends than I thought for. By-the-bye, too, what books has he written? He seemed very modest on the subject when I asked him, and said he wrote under a feigned name; but I think, when we first came, you told me he had been reading one of his books to you?”

Now, it is laid at our sex’s door that we can none of us keep a secret. True, that Mr. Raven had begged us to preserve his literary *incognito*, and until now we had all religiously complied with his request. There was that, however, in my cousin’s tone which so much, I thought, implied disparagement of Mr. Raven’s position in the literary world, that, though I could not help owing to myself that my lion had somewhat fallen in my own estimation since I had seen him in every day life,—I say these doubts, with anxiety to maintain the reputation of our hero, strongly urged me to let the cat out of the bag. The impulse was irresistible when his reputation was thus called in question; and having first gone through the form of exacting a promise of secrecy from Mr. Waters, I prepared to reveal to him who Mr. Raven really was. “Have you ever read ‘Adam Bede?’” I cautiously asked. “Adam Bede!” he exclaimed, with a start of surprise, “I should think I have! Why the *Athenæum* reviewed it as the cleverest work of fiction that had come out for the last twenty years. Raven never wrote that. You won’t make me believe it!” “Did he not?” I replied, and crossed the room to fetch the first volume of that book. I opened the cover, and triumphantly pointed out to my

cousin's wondering gaze, "To dearest Fanny, with the author's affectionate regards." "There!" I exclaimed, "will that convince you?" "And is that Mr. Raven's handwriting?" asked Mr. Waters. "Yes." "And he gave it to Fanny Green?" "Yes," I replied. "And I am bound," he continued, "by my promise to you, not to congratulate him on his extraordinary and highly gifted writings as the author of that book?" "Yes, again. But how strangely you take the communication, Cousin John! Does not Mr. Raven rise immeasurably in your esteem?" "Humph!" he replied, "I shall buy a copy next time I am in town. Let me see where it is published." He took down the address. There was something in John's whole manner of receiving the intelligence I had just imparted which puzzled me. I could not understand why he looked so grave about it; but before I could demand any explanation, some one came in, and I only had time once again to enjoin silence. I felt rather guilty, for I would not for the world have Mr. Raven think a woman could not keep a secret, and he had so strictly enjoined me not to tell; when I said so to my cousin, "I'll be bound he did," was the reply, and he left the room.

"When skies are cleared, storms are said to be the highest." We had lately had so pleasant a coterie at Rose Cottage that any change was approached with regret, and when Mr. Green's announcement to his mother that he was coming to join us for a time I arrived, don't think his advent was hailed by any one. Certainly not by Mr. Raven, who no sooner heard the intelligence of Mr. Green's proposed visit than he talked of a trip into the country, which must, he said, come off before he married, as it was to a bachelor, and where he could not so well take Fanny as to his other friends. We, however, persuaded him to defer this journey for a few days, as there were several little evening engagements, in which he was included, for that week. Mr. Waters was the only one of the circle who expressed pleasure at making Mr. Green's acquaintance. "He has not yet seen him!" thought I. That evening Fanny's father arrived, and we all dined very happily together, after which Mr. Waters invited Mr. Green to take a stroll and smoke a cigar with him. Fanny and Mr. Raven also went out. Meantime, good Mrs. Green, Mrs. Waters, Emma Green, and myself, brought out our needlework, and sat down to work and chat in the front room. Alas! that evening, begun so quietly, was indeed a memorable one—such a one as does not occur often in a lifetime, and of which the events are but too well impressed upon my mind. Within a few hours we ladies received a shock which nearly paralysed us with distrust and alarm. Could we believe all that we were then told of Mr. Raven to be true?

It is said that startling events rarely come alone, and certainly that evening was an instance of the truth of the proverb; for we had scarcely recovered from one distressing event before another still more painful revelation was forced on us—both in reference to Mrs. Green's lodger, in whom we all felt so great an interest. We were, as I said, busy at work on a portion of Fanny's garments, and talking of the Madeira scheme, when the door-bell rang violently, and a thundering knock at the door startled us; voices were heard on the steps, and we listened, the door being ajar, to know who could be coming at this unwonted hour. "Does a Mr. Raven live here?" we heard distinctly, and as distinctly the voice of the little maid—"No, sir!" "Are you sure?" again asked the voice. "No, sir! but he used to live here. He went away a long time ago!" said Mary. "What does the girl mean?" said Miss Green. "I dare say it is some one on business—perhaps from the publishers. I will go and tell them he is only out for a walk." So saying, she left us, with the door open. "Did I hear you ask for Mr. Raven?" began Miss Green; but she started back as she saw two policemen in the hall, and Mary trembling like a leaf. "Yes, ma'am!" said the constable. "Your servant has just told me that Mr. Raven, *alias* Mr. Wood, is not here. We think differently; and perhaps you will allow us to look for ourselves, in virtue of this search-warrant!" and he produced a paper. "What do you mean?" said Miss Green, alarmed. "Why, ma'am, nothing more than what we say. We've orders to take this Mr. Raven in custody for being supposed to be concerned in a forgery! You can see the warrant, if you don't believe us."

By this time Mrs. Green and myself had put down our work and risen. Taken aback as we were, our womanly instinct seemed to strike us all three at once with the same idea—to screen Mr. Raven from the officers. Fortunately Miss Green had not yet committed herself when we joined her, and, taking the initiative, I said, boldly (may I be forgiven the falsehood!), "There must be some mistake; Mr. Raven does not live here! This house belongs to these ladies—Mrs. Green and her daughter. The gentlemen who are staying here are Mr. Green, her son, and Mr. Waters, a clergyman from the country." My self-possession of manner somewhat nonplussed the officers. "He was, I think, living here lately, ma'am?" he said. "A smallish man, with a dark moustache; calls himself an author; goes to market early; was once in Grant and Co.'s employ; he is suspected of being concerned in several jewel robberies!" "You must surely refer to some one else," I said, continuing to act as spokeswoman, for Mrs. and Miss Green were speechless with affright. "Well, ma'am, I am sorry to contradict you; but as we've a warrant out against him, and he has

been traced here, we must beg leave to search the house." "Of course!" I replied. "Mrs. Green would be the last person to resist the ends of justice. Mary, bring a candle, and show the way!" Now, happily, the little attic into which Mr. Raven had moved, to accommodate my friends, was quite at the top of the house, and was only approached through a narrow door leading out of another attic used only as a lumber-room. "This is the strangest proceeding I ever heard of in a lady's house," I said, "but perhaps you will begin your search downstairs." "All the same, madam," replied the policeman; "we will give as little trouble as possible, but we must do our duty. It is as well to leave one of us here to see no one walks out." "I don't think there is an area," said the other, taking his position in the hall. While the elder officer went into the sitting-room I whispered Miss Green, "Run up and hang my old dress on the attic door." She did so, looking terrified. The officer then proceeded from the drawing-room to the kitchen and offices, and then upstairs into the bedrooms, where, of course, he found no Mr. Raven; nor in the Waters' bed-chamber did he find any trace of him. "Well," he said, as he came down, "if he's not here he is not far off." "Now you have done your duty," I said, very sternly, "you may, I think, leave the house." This they could not refuse; and with a pretence at an apology, they departed and left us alone. "What does it all mean?" said dear old Mrs. Green, trembling violently; "do you think those men had really a warrant to arrest Charles, or have they taken him for some one else?" "Mary," I said, and turned quickly to the girl, who stood behind us, as if she required our protection, "what made you say Mr. Raven did not live here the moment you were asked?" "He told me, ma'am," stammered the girl, "and gave me two shillings when he first came to say so if any one asked for him." "And have you ever denied him before?" I again asked. "Yes, ma'am, twice before, ma'am," replied Mary. I made no observation to her, but dismissed her to her work, and closed the door. What was to be done? Mrs. Waters was almost ready to faint; Miss Green indignantly refused to believe that anything was really wrong; she was sure some one else was intended, and not Charles. I had no such hope; my suspicions had been awakened, and now a veil seemed all at once to drop from my eyes. Mr. Raven sunk in a moment from the literary lion to the clever swindler. Why else had he told Mary to deny him? Why had he else enjoined silence as to his authorship? Why had John Waters looked so grave when I confided to him the secret? Where were his relations? And then came the idea, was it he that had stolen the salver just before he paid his debts? These thoughts flashed like lightning through my brain, but as yet I did not venture to put them into words. In a short time Mr. Waters

would be in, and advise us what to do. "But suppose," said Mrs. Green, "Charles should come in first. What must be done?" I advised in that case to take no notice of what had occurred until the others returned; "but we are pretty sure he and Fanny will not be in a hurry." As may be supposed, we four ladies were in great trepidation; our tongues did not cease, and Mrs. Waters heard much more than she before knew about our connection with Mr. Raven. We were, however, again interrupted by another ring, but this time not so imperative. Mary looked in, and seemed afraid to go to the door. So I, who had apparently received an extra amount of courage for the occasion, went myself to open the door. This time it was a woman's voice. Seeing a lady, she said, "I want, if you please, to see Mr. Raven." "On business?" I said, taking a good look at the visitor as I spoke. She was a respectably-dressed young person, apparently of the tradeswoman class, about twenty-five years of age, I guessed. "Yes, on business, ma'am; indeed, I can't go away without seeing him. Will you tell him so?" Here, thought I to myself, is an opportunity of learning something of his former history. "Mr. Raven is out," I replied, "but if you will walk in, I don't think he will be long before he returns." The woman heaved a sigh of relief, and stepped into the hall. I then opened a little room adjoining the drawing-room, where the rest of the party were sitting, and asked her to sit down. "This person," I said through the open door, "wishes to see Mr. Raven." Mrs. Green immediately approached her, and inquired what she wanted with him, eyeing her through her spectacles as she asked the question. "Want with him, ma'am!" said the woman, trying to compose herself; "want with him! First tell me, is it true he is living here and is going to be married, as folks say at the corner shop, to the young lady living here?" "What if it be true?" said Miss Green, who had also come to the drawing-room door. "What business can it be of yours?" she continued, indignantly. The poor woman burst into tears, and could no longer restrain her pent-up feelings. "He is not Mr. Raven at all," she said, sobbing; "his name is Wood, and he belongs to me. It is four years since I first knew him; he left me and the child just eight months ago, and I've not had a penny from him since. I've sold all my furniture to pay my rent, and worked hard, too, or I should have been starved; but he has never been near me once all the time. I've now walked all the way from Brighton, where he left us, and I must see him. He shall do me justice!" and she told us a history of desertion and neglect which was heartrending. There was such genuine misery, such bald truth in her statements, and her manner was too natural for us to suspect a falsehood. This was a worse revelation than the other. All our woman's nature was

enlisted for the sufferer before us, and rose against the man who had acted such a heartless part towards his victim: Not only had he forced himself into the bosom of an honest family, and carried on a deception as to his own character, but was attempting to blight the happiness and prospects of one of its members.

Darker and darker grew our troubles, as we thought of Fanny and her devotion to her worthless lover. All seemed to have come upon us so suddenly, we could hardly believe our senses. We might have deemed we were dreaming, but there sat the poor woman, sobbing. "If this is all true," I said, being spokeswoman, "you are much to be pitied, but Mr. Raven is not now here. What can we do?" At this juncture, happily for us, in came Mr. Green and Mr. Waters. How relieved we were to hear their voices when the door opened, instead of Mr. Raven and Fanny, whose return we had so feared. Taking the gentlemen into the next room, I told them of the two circumstances that had occurred since they went out. "We are not much surprised," said Mr. Waters. "To say the truth, my wife has lately confided to me so many extraordinary things which Mr. Raven has told Mrs. Green, relative to his intended acts of liberality, his friends, &c., that I felt sure all could not be genuine, and that Mrs. Green's credulity was being practised upon. Your communication to me yesterday began to open my eyes, and I merely took Mr. Green out to-night to bring proofs that a gross deception was being practised upon his mother, and that she was harbouring an imposter in her house. After what I heard yesterday, I made a point of calling on the publisher of 'Adam Bede,' for I felt convinced from what I had seen of Mr. Raven (though I don't deny he is a very gentlemanly, clever fellow) that he never wrote such a book, and we were about to unmask his authorship this evening, as a preliminary step to learning his motive for the deception." "Well, Mr. Green," I said, as I remembered the visitor in the next room, "you had best see this poor woman who is waiting, or Mr. Raven will be returning while she is here." Accordingly, Mr. Green had an interview with her, and satisfied himself of the truth of her tale. He somehow or other persuaded her to leave, as Mr. Raven was not in, suggesting that she would be more likely to find him at ten o'clock on the following morning. We then had a consultation as to how best we should act when the couple came home. Mr. Green was in a great rage, not, however, considering so much poor Fanny's position as his own cause for revenge on a man who had so grossly insulted him. He could not talk quietly, and it was a happy thing for us that Mr. Waters remained cool and collected, and did his best to persuade Mr. Green to control himself, or his own purpose, he said, would be defeated. He felt sure the better plan was to receive Mr. Raven

quietly, and carry out their original intention of taxing him with the deception he had played upon the ladies. As he had been the first to discover the fraud, Mr. Waters proposed that he should introduce the subject. It would be quite time enough when they heard his defence to attack him on graver points. Even while we spoke we heard Fanny's voice on the steps, and the latch-key (for Mr. Raven had long since had that privilege) turn in the door, and the pair entered. Mr. Waters, in an undertone, begged his wife to withdraw; while Mrs. Green was equally anxious Fanny should not be present at the interview. The latter intention was more difficult to accomplish, until Miss Green, who was really in a most nervous state, said she had rather not remain in the room, and would go up with Fanny to take off her bonnet, and keep her upstairs.

Mr. Raven came in in his usual quiet way, utterly ignorant of the storm that was brewing, took his accustomed seat, and remarked, "It is a fine night." "Very so," said Mr. Waters, "there seem to be plenty of people about; we have not been in half an hour." "Have you seen the evening paper?" said Mr. Raven—"any news?" "Yes," said Mr. Waters; "there is a piece of news, which, I suppose, will electrify you literary people not a little. But perhaps you have heard it?" "No, what?" said Mr. Raven, looking up. "Why, the real author of 'Adam Bede' has been discovered. Moreover, that the George Eliot has turned out to be a lady." A very blank look came over Mr. Raven's face. He looked first at Mrs. Green, and then at me; both of us were silent. "Indeed!" he said, "I fear I cannot credit that statement, with no disrespect to the ladies. Does the newspaper astute give its authority?" Here Mr. Green could no longer command himself, but broke out in a furious tone. "Mr. Raven," he said, "we have discovered your cheat. I'm not a man to be gulled with impunity. Pray, sir, how dare you enter this house, or presume to take advantage of the credulity of its inmates, passing yourself off to them, and still more to me, sir, as a man of the world, that you wrote that and other books under the assumed name of George Eliot, and draw your resources from your brains! Pretty brains they are, sir, not to have laid a better train, if you must deceive! You are a rogue and a sneak, sir, and I demand an explanation!" Mr. Green stood up before Mr. Raven in a defiant attitude, and waited for an answer. Mr. Raven was white with agitation. "Sir," he said, attempting to address Mr. Green, "you shall answer for your words. Mrs. Green," and he turned to the old lady, "you have confided to me the character of your son; I am, therefore, not so surprised at his language and demeanour as I should otherwise have been. To-night I can but surmise he must be under the influence of drink." At this Mr. Green broke out more furiously

than ever, and then, before us all, informed him, in no mild terms, but in the most vituperative language, of the poor woman's visit, and accused him of every kind of crime. Mr. Raven, after an ejaculation of surprise, goaded on by Mr. Green's terms of reproach, lost his own temper also, and reproached Mr. Green with many things that had come to his ears about him (but too true). It was a most shameful and disgraceful scene, during which I really put my fingers in my ears to avoid hearing some of the opprobrious terms used by the parties, but especially by Mr. Green. Mr. Waters at last succeeded in quieting both the gentlemen, reminding them of our presence. I will say for Mr. Raven, he was the first, on this reminder, to restrain his anger. Whereupon Mr. Green flew upstairs, boiling with rage, to forbid Fanny ever again to speak to Mr. Raven. Mr. Waters then took the opportunity of telling Mr. Raven about the visit of the policemen, and their object; which, in the former attack he had made upon him, Mr. Green had forgotten to mention. Poor Mr. Raven! this intelligence completed the crisis of his miserable position. Bowed down with the events which had apparently all crowded together to witness to his shame, he sat crestfallen; nor did he attempt to defend himself by advancing a word of exculpation. The change from the strife of words to the silence which followed was painful in the extreme, and it was not in woman's nature not to feel deeply for the wretched man before us. Poor old Mrs. Green sobbed like a child; I was too excited to weep, only wondering how it would all end.

"You best know, Mr. Raven," said Mr. Waters, "how far you are implicated in the charge these men laid at your door. Now, the position you have placed yourself in as regards this family, and your connection with the unfortunate young woman who has appealed against you, are in a measure your own private concerns; but if the officers of justice are really on your track, it would, to my view of things, add to Mrs. Green's distress that you should be taken into custody at her house. It might then make public what for the sake of all parties would be undesirable, and had best be kept as private as possible. Would it not, therefore, be better that you left her house at once; particularly as Mr. Green's just anger at your conduct to his daughter may lead to still further unpleasantness." Mr. Raven evidently saw the policy of this last suggestion, as did we all; but how was Mr. Raven to escape? Mr. Waters said most probably the police were watching the premises, and he only wondered how they had let him enter just before. Mr. Raven, in a very subdued tone, owned he was implicated in a very disagreeable matter in connection with a friend, which might, he feared, get him into trouble; and that he felt every moment was of consequence, in order to get out of England. In a faltering tone he assured Mrs.

Green that in other respects he should, he hoped, soon have the opportunity of exculpating himself in her eyes from some of the heinous charges Mr. Green had brought against him. He entreated her not to judge him unheard, nor oblige Fanny to desert him in the hour of trouble; but he had no fears—he knew her love for him would surmount such obstacles. Mrs. Green shook her head. “Oh, Mr. Raven,” she said, “all I can ask of you, if the events of to-night are not a fabrication, is to quit my house at once, and never attempt to see Fanny again.” “I must see her once more, if only for a moment,” returned Mr. Raven. Mr. Waters here interrupted him. “Under the circumstances, sir, that cannot be.”

I really could not help pitying Mr. Raven, for I believe he was really attached to Fanny, and the anguish of tone, the wretchedness of his expression as I looked upon him excited my sympathy, and dwelt long upon my memory. It made me forget for the moment the deception he had practised upon me as well as the rest of the family, and anxiety that he should escape seemed uppermost in my mind. I even volunteered advice and assistance—a woman's wit is not to be despised on such occasions. What had become of either my prudence or my resentment? How could he get away if the police were watching? He must be disguised. Could he not best escape observation if he put on woman's clothes? He thanked me for my kind suggestion in the most affecting tone. It was the very thing, in fact, the only chance. I left the room all excitement, returning with a skirt, a shawl, a bonnet, and a crinoline. These Mr. Raven seized with avidity, and hurried with them into his own room. He soon came down again. What a metamorphosis! Surely to that remembrance of crinoline everything was due. It redeemed its character for utility, and to it Mr. Raven owed his escape. As he stood before us I could not help asking myself, were we acting a charade? or was the whole scene a dream? Our hero has indeed fallen. If his patrons, of whom he so often spoke, could now have seen him, would he have been an accepted visitor at their tables? Would Sir Bulwer Lytton have invited him into his brougham? I thought. But there was no time to lose. Mr. Waters was evidently anxious for all our sakes that he should be gone before Mr. Green came down again. In my impatience to complete the disguise I ran down to the kitchen and returned with the beer jug, in which Mary was in the habit of fetching the ale for supper, about this hour, and hoped he might be taken for her if any watchers were about and saw it in his hand. A minute more and the door closed on him; while, had he been an injured and innocent man, I do not think my sympathies could have been more excited in favour of his escape.

“What contradictions you women are!” said my cousin, as soon

as Mr. Raven was really gone, and I then went off into a hysterical fit, sobbing and gasping out, "What a dreadful business! What a wicked man! What is to be done about Fanny?" Just then Mr. Green came down, having had a violent scene with his daughter, who refused to believe one word against her dear Charles, besides showing a great want of respect to her father by upbraiding him. He said she had behaved so ill, and so persisted in going to ask Mr. Raven about it, that he had locked her up in her room till he had seen that scamp out of the house. We told him Mr. Raven was gone. I then went upstairs to give the same intimation to Fanny and Miss Green. The former was furious at not having seen him before he left, and most indignant at his having disguised himself. It looked, she said, as if he were not able to face his accusers. "It did, Fanny," I said, "and satisfied us all that he was guilty." "You must think no more of him," said Miss Green. "Yes, Fanny," I added, "he is not worthy of you, and you must give him up." "That I will never do, Miss Linley. You don't know all I do! Only tell me where he is gone!" and she threw herself at my knees half frantic with distress. "No one knows, Fanny, and I hope we may never know or hear of him again." This increased her sobs; her aunt and myself feared she would make herself really ill; so we undressed her and put her to bed. Little sleep had any of us that night! In the wakeful hours I reviewed my whole acquaintance with the individual who had so deceived us all, and wondered who of us was most to blame. The unsophisticated Greens, won by his address and agreeable manners, had taken him from the first at his own valuation. I, believing them to have known him previously, fell into the same error, and, deceived by his flattery, was entrapped in the snare set for me; but as I recalled to mind link after link of the chain of his life, as revealed to us day by day, I wondered at our blindness and folly in not having detected the improbability of his representations. My self-respect was lowered. I wondered if men would have been so easily taken in. There was Mr. Green—but then he had been little with us, and was never cordial to Mr. Raven.

During the next week we heard nothing of Mr. Raven, either privately or in the newspapers, where we searched for intelligence, either in that name, or the name of Wood, or other *aliases*. We therefore concluded he had escaped, and had, perhaps, left the country. Fanny was all this time sullen and moody. We could hardly persuade her to leave her room; and when she did come among us, it was only to upbraid us all, especially her father, with being the cause of her misery. We bore with her, poor girl, as we felt how much she was to be pitied. We hoped that time, and the conviction of Mr. Raven's worthlessness, would make her see

things in a different light, and that, in the end, she would rejoice in her escape. Alas for our hopes! Within a fortnight of Mr. Raven's exit, Fanny herself was missing, and no trace of her whereabouts could we find. That her lover had contrived to communicate with her, and had persuaded her to leave her friends, we could not doubt, but how was a mystery we could not fathom. Mr. Green was more furious than ever. He said she might go where she would, for all he cared; never again would he own her as his child. Vain were all our inquiries. Her poor old grandmother was almost heartbroken. What an end to all her day-dreams for poor Fanny! But life must go on, notwithstanding its troubles and disappointments; the storms subside, and the calms ensue. After having talked the subject over in every possible way, and found there were no means of redress or power of helping her, we subsided into our usual mode of life, never, however, ceasing to wonder at our own blindness, hoping continually that the poor girl's portion might be happier than we feared. Winter, spring, and summer passed away; autumn had arrived in all its beauty. I was about to accept an invitation to spend a month with the Waters, when, one morning, the post brought a letter to Mrs. Green, with Paris postmark. The old lady opened it with trembling hands, for the address was in Fanny's handwriting. In it she begged either her grandmother or aunt to go to her immediately. She was in a miserable state; Mr. Raven had left her and her infant, six weeks before, at an hotel in Paris, promising to return shortly. The poor babe had died suddenly, and she had heard nothing from Charles for more than a month. All her letters to him had been returned from the address he had left with her; her funds were exhausted—she had not a single franc; she had sold all her trinkets, and nearly all her clothes, to pay for the poor baby's burial. She said she was wretched, but she did not want to come home; she only begged for help until Charles came back; she was sure he would soon come. Here was a new revelation of Mr. Raven's villainy. Poor Fanny! What was to be done? Neither grandmother nor aunt had the means to go to her assistance. We wrote to Mr. Green, who raved again, "She might lie on the bed she had made for herself; he would neither own nor aid her. Happily I bethought me of a friend of mine in Paris. We made up among us a little sum of money—ill could it be spared from any of our purses! I wrote, however, to Mr. H——, to ask him to call at the hotel, and see poor Fanny, and give it to her. Mrs. Green also wrote to entreat her to come to England at once with the money sent, offering to receive her until some other home presented itself. This letter was never received by her granddaughter. In a short time the money was returned by my friend. He wrote

to say he had been, as we requested, to the Hotel Lion d'Or, in the Rue Castellane, but no such lady as we named was to be found. He then asked to see the landlord, who informed him that Monsieur and Madame Winter (which was the name they had gone by) had been there for some time; that monsieur had left madame, as she had stated, in the most cruel way, without paying his bill, or without funds for her use; that the poor lady had been in great trouble and distress, and had lost her infant. That he had let her remain out of pity for some weeks, hoping monsieur would return, as he had promised, or that madame would write to her friends, which he strongly urged her to do, a course of conduct which she was unwilling to believe necessary, as she was sure monsieur would soon be back; that only yesterday an English gentleman, who heard her sobbing in her room, had taken pity on her, paid the bill, and they had left soon after to join monsieur, as she said. Mr. H—— could elicit nothing further. Nor have we. With that last sad letter the curtain dropped over the future history of herself and the wretch who had been the cause of her flight. Some three years afterwards I read an account in the papers of a very curious forgery case, most cleverly executed. The description of the principal criminal justified my suspicions that Mr. Raven was alive and at large. I am still residing with the Greens. I always felt I had, by my credulity, unwittingly fed theirs, and had thus been a participator in their troubles; so I determined I would not leave them, but fill the vacant niche in Rose Cottage, adding my little means to theirs to keep the wolf from the door, and soften their lot by making them forget, as far as possible, their sad trial. One thing we agreed upon in our arrangements—we would admit no unknown authors or gentleman boarders. My literary aspirations had received a check, and I was in future quite contented to benefit by the brains of others for my reading and amusement, without coveting either to be admitted into the clique of the literate, or to write bad verses, and still worse prose, only to receive in return the flattering encouragement of as cleverly gilded a scapegrace as ever escaped justice, or deceived woman by false smiles and winning demeanour.

As to the moral of my tale, let the readers judge for themselves. In the present day there are numbers of ladies brought up as I had been, in the retirement of country life, whose circumstances later oblige to enter as boarders in families who supplement their incomes by such arrangements. Often the prospect of pecuniary advantage causes references as to antecedents and character to be too much neglected by the principals of a house; thus they and their inmates are subjected to the risk of dangerous associations. To such I hope these pages may not only serve as the amusement

of an hour, but will be a warning not to allow a too unsuspicious nature to take people by their own representations. Mr. Raven is not a fictitious character, and there are many such in the world—men but too ready to fasten themselves on the credulous, rob the widow, and entrap unwary youth into their snares, just whichever may answer their purpose.

Woman's trust is, doubtless, one of the brightest gems in the female character, and when well bestowed, forms the basis of domestic joy. Yet when favourable circumstances appear to guarantee the bestowal of her faith, how often is her credulity misplaced! The bark in which her life's happiness is freighted founders, and she survives the wreck with the bitter thought that her love and trust have been received but as fuel to feed the flame of man's selfishness and vanity. If such occurs, as it too frequently does, among those whom we have learnt to consider as tried and valued friends, how much more caution is needed ere we place confidence in the casual acquaintance of such strangers as may cross our path!

A FATAL LAW

I.

A TALE of terror and of human hate ;
 A tale of love subjected unto fate ;
 A tale old chroniclers seem loath to trace,—
 Forgotten are the men, the time, the place.

The king was old. As a proud falcon broods
 High on the cliff, above the pleasant woods,
 Where, circling round and round with grand disdain,
 His young ones long to sweep across the plain,—
 So he, enthroned in all his ancient state,
 Scarce heeding watched the trembling hand of fate ;
 Watching and waiting for the coming hour
 When the stern gods should rob him of his power ;
 When all the land should treasured offerings bring,
 And hail another ruler as their king.

But lest the vengeance of the gods should rise
 Against him and his house, a sacrifice
 He made, and then a public feast, in praise
 Of them, with thanks for peace and length of days
 They granted him ; and further to obtain
 All needful blessings, as the gift of rain,
 The sunshine, all the tenderness of spring,
 The summer heat, the autumn gathering,
 The shielding snows of winter,—there went forth
 Through all the land he ruled, from south to north,
 From east to west, across the circling seas,
 To far-off isles embowered in mysteries,
 A stern command, that, whoso should refuse
 To worship these dread gods, to pay them dues,
 Be he the lowliest or of rank and power,
 Should be, within the circuit of the hour,
 Cast from the cliffs that breast the longing deep,
 Over the rocks round which the sad waves creep ;
 And lest blind Justice in her cause should err,
 The king would be the executioner.

And, further, to ensure his country's good,
 And save his people from all civil feud,
 Whene'er that fatal shadow fell across
 His kingly path, presaging kingly loss,

Upon this day of feasting he had planned
That all the knights and nobles of the land
Should gather at his palace by the sea,
To join him in his glad festivity ;
So that his only child, his daughter fair
As fairest flowers wooed by the summer air,
Might choose some zealous lord who would engage
To comfort her in her sad orphanage ;
To rule the land with her, uphold the laws ;
To redress wrong—defend her people's cause ;
To cherish glory, honour noble worth,
To cast the light of peace across the earth ;
Perfect in grand control o'er human things—
The proud continuance of a line of kings.

Like a young fawn, used to the winding ways
Among secluded forests' leafy maze
Espieing suddenly the glaring sky,
Far-stretching plains, great rivers roaring by,
Is filled with fearful doubts and sudden fright,
So the king's daughter, in the rare delight
Of youth and beauty, and the charms of song,
Clung to her father ; and the courteous throng
Looking upon her as she, trembling, stood
All bashful in her pride of maidenhood,
Whispered her wondrous beauty could command
The most unloyal wretch in all the land ;
While maidens proud as summer days in spring,
Wondered why men should praise so poor a thing.

Faded the sunny summer afternoon ;
Uprose the night : far off the full-orbed moon
Silvered the meadows ; casement in the room
Caught trails of glory, cast them through the gloom :
They lay upon her hair, her cheeks, her eyes,
As the Lord's smile upon His angels lies.

II.

A wretch, whose country loathed him from that day
Dwelt near the town that round the palace lay ;
And holding land and powers, and possessed
Of all the charms of knighthood save the best,—
The chivalry, the bravery, the desire
To cherish truth and honour,—did aspire
To wed the daughter of his king ; but she,

Spurning his suit proudly and scornfully,
He left her in his anger, in his breast
Nursing a passion scarcely half-suppressed.

He left his castles, forests, and estates,
To seek Revenge. Oft at the palace-gates,
Disguised, he lingered : now a beggar maid
Craved royal bounty, lingering in the shade ;
Now to the court he showed some wondrous thing
Now, a grey-bearded minstrel, he would sing,
While nobles gathered round, of scorn, and hate,
And dread disgrace of those in high estate ;
Dressed in the robes her serving-women wore
Vainly he lingered round her chamber-door ;
And oft at night close to it he would creep ;
Trusting dark dreams would pass along her sleep,
Which, when she woke, might cause a sudden cry,
Wherein some hidden meaning he might spy.

III.

One summer eve, when all along the land
An awful sunset blazed : and burning sand
Seethed, as across it ran the hot-breathed sea,
In long dull waves : and mournful minstrelsy
Crept through the forest, all along the shore :
And angry, fiery clouds came trailing o'er,
From fiery east to west, and south, and north,
The anger of the offended gods broke forth.

This wretched man, in priestly robes arrayed,
Lingered, until the day began to fade,
Around the palace ; and all suddenly,
The gates were opened, came a company
Of courtiers and fair ladies ; and among
The laughter-loving, laughter-kindling throng,
A face shone sweetly which, twelve months ago,
Had frowned upon him ; very soft and low
That voice was which his quickened memory,
Like a dark phantom, brooding fearfully,
Whispered had mocked him ; while the old smile fell
Around another, with the same old spell
That held him captive ; and he watched till he
Grew almost mad from depth of misery.

Upon his search for vengeance ever bent,
With noiseless tread he followed where they went ;

Along the pathway, through the forest grey,
 Down the green slopes that ran to greet the bay,
 Across the wondrous marge of shining sand
 That lay between the water and the land ;
 Along the tall, white cliffs, until she stood
 Beneath the shadow of an ancient wood—
 A spot among the rocks where flowers grew,
 And smoothest grass was spread of greenest hue ;
 Where sat a solitary nightingale,
 Filling the silence with a plaintive tale ;
 Where through the branches and the waving grass,
 Sometimes the sad sea voices gently pass,
 Which on the listening senses faintly fall
 Like echoes of a fairy madrigal.

Here in the solemn twilight rested they,
 Watching the moonbeams chase the sun away,
 Watching the stars above the sea arise,
 And shine as shine an angel's pitying eyes ;
 Talking of deeds of daring, well won praise,
 And all the glory of the olden days.

Upon a shining, moss-enwreathèd stone,
 The princess and her lover sat alone ;
 And both were silent, while within their eyes
 Seemed the faint shadow of some great surprise—
 A fearful surmise only half-defined,
 Wandering along the mazes of the mind ;
 A hidden doubt and terror half-concealed,
 And then, with fear and trembling, half-revealed.
 A rustling among the meadow-grass—
 Is it the night winds murmuring as they pass ?
 A sound of footsteps treading swift but light—
 Are spirits of the woods abroad to-night ?

IV.

Sadly the sun rose on the morrow morn,
 Glaring across the mountains ; and upborne
 On silent-moving wings the shadowy dawn
 Flew down the valleys ; from afar the moan
 Of many winds crept o'er the moaning sea ;
 Then birds began to stir—each rock and tree
 Stood clothed in music ; lowing oxen broke
 Their paddocks. / Thus the mighty world awoke.

Through dusty lanes, around the quaint old town,
Bright cavalcades of noblemen came down,
Followed by serving men in gay array—
Fit clothing for a royal marriage-day,
Laden with many a rare and dainty thing—
Fit presents for the daughter of a king.

Sunshine was all around, blue skies above ;
Through the bride's eyes shone innocence and love ;
As pale as palest lily in its sheath
She through the leafy lattice looked beneath,
And heard the noise, and saw the crowds of men,
And, weeping, to her chamber went again.

There, kneeling down, she hid her tearful eyes
In both her hands ; she heard their shouts arise ;
She heard her name repeated in their songs ;
She heard loud welcomings, what time the throngs
Entered the palace ; likewise in her ears
She heard soft echoes of the far-off years,
Before she loved him ; and she saw, likewise,
Visions of all the future years arise,
Heart-flowers of love, in all love's rarest bloom,
Blooming before her in the shady room.
Whereat she ceased to weep, began to pray
For blessings on her gladsome marriage-day ;
Not to the gods, whom all her kin adored,
But to the blessed Christ, whom all abhorred.
She ceased. Her maidens came. Her bridal dress
They clad her in. In all her loveliness
She left her chamber ; and before her feet
Doors opened silently ; sounds soft and sweet
Haunted the palace ; sunlight lay along
Her path. The echoes of a tender song
A bird was singing in the orange-trees
Crept through half-open flower-clasped lattices.

Soon to the gorgeous banquet-hall they came,
And entered. Then uprose the loud acclaim
Of loyal hearts. But lo ! another cry
Disturbed the palace : that most cruel spy,
Impelled by vengeance and the stern gods' awe,
Uprose to urge the penalties of law.
With cunning tongue, feigning a piteous tone,

He told how, standing yester-night alone
Among the shadowy woods that front the bay,
Two lovers passed him on their happy way.
He, listening to the converse as they went,
Grew curious ; strange words he heard ; intent
Upon the service of the state, he drew
Nearer to them, and soon their secret knew :
How they had dared to break that solemn law,
Which held the greatest heretics in awe ;
How they had dared to disregard their king,
Spurning the gods, and ever worshipping
The Christ. He paused : amid the pause
The cries of all the courtiers uprose,
Clamouring for judgment. Then when these he heard
The madness of the heart within him stirred
His tongue to quick results : " Accept, O king,
The loyal offering I gladly bring.
The breakers of the law before thee stand :
Thy future son—the princess of our land.
Lest justice in this holy cause should err,
Thyself must be the executioner !"

V.

Noon ! and the fiery sunbeams glare and fall
Across the courtyard, on the palace wall.
Noon ! and no sound of busy life is heard
Around the palace : only that sad bird,
Grieving amid the blooming orange tree,
Sang plaintively. Far-off the sunlit sea
Drowsily languished on the passionless shore ;
Far-off along the brown and wasted moor
The greatness of a force-expended storm
Lingered, and envious winds began to form
A mimic front of stormy battle lines ;
Far-off the swaying of the tall dark pines
Seemed ominous, and many an awful sign
Was seen, which wondering men could not define.

Noon ! and the fiery sunbeams smote the tower
Wherein they waited judgment. Wealth and power,
And all the coming joys of wedded life,
The freedom from all wretchedness and strife,
Were theirs no longer ; yet each felt within
A steadfast heart triumphant over sin ;
Forgiving all, and praying that in Heaven
Their faith was blessed, their former sins forgiven.

Noon ! and the fiery sunbeams fall and shine
 Upon a long-extended, warlike line
 Of spearmen ; on the priest, who round them made
 Mysterious signs, imploring mighty aid
 From the stern gods in this, their holy cause,
 This mighty vindication of the laws.

But when the king came forth, and long and loud
 The trumpet blew, the courtiers and the crowd
 Kept awful silence ; while each haughty priest,
 Awed by his agony, drew back and ceased
 The solemn chanting. With his head low bent
 He stood before them, while there came and went
 Strange thoughts and fancies ; through the thickening haze
 Of bygone years came forth forgotten days
 Of tilt and tournament ; and evermore
 Prophetic voices haunted him ; the roar
 Of tempests, when along the Northern seas
 Swept on his richly-laden argosies,
 He heard ; likewise the savage heathens' cry,
 What time with fire and sword, to glorify
 The gods, he smote them. But for him
 No more of battles or of glory ! On the shore
 His idle galleys lay ; his glorious fame
 Ingloriously would perish ; yea, his *name*
 Pass into silence, or remain the scorn
 Of nobler generations yet unborn !

The clanking of the armed spearmen's spears
 Broke through the echoes of his hopes and fears,
 Arousing him. Then from the palace came
 Those who regarded not dread death and shame.
 Between the lines of armed men they passed ;
 Through gorgeous corridors ; beneath the vast
 Circumference of spacious domes, that reared
 Their gilded summits high ; down dark, and weird,
 And winding galleries they went along,
 Until they stood amid the noble throng
 Around the king. There, standing silently,
 Calmly they listened to the dread decree—
 " The law commands that, lest blind justice err,
 The king should be the executioner ! "

VI.

• Noon ! and the fiery sunbeams hotly lie
 Upon the cliffs that breast the calm blue sky ;

While, all below, the swift-winged sea-birds call
Across the bay ; below, the rise and fall
Of multitudinous and foaming waves,
Echoing, dies away 'mong rocks and caves.

Noon ! on a cliff which overhung the deep
The far-off crowds beheld a woman weep ;
Her eyes uplifted to the pitiless skies,
Her loosened hair hiding those weeping eyes,
Close to her lover, whose cold lips were pressed
Upon the cold face nestling to his breast.

Below, a movement in the awe-struck crowd—
Above, an anguished cry, re-echoing loud ;
Above, a last, long look, a fearful leap ;
Below, the sullen roaring of the deep.

VII.

Night ! and the moon arose, and moonlight lay
Along the cliffs. Night ! and above the bay
The stars came out, and shone along the hills.
Night ! from afar the noise of babbling rills
Along the listening shore ran plaintively,
And evermore towards the listening sea.

Night ! and among the moonlit rocks there ran
A wretched, broken-hearted, white-haired man.
Night ! and among the soft sea-weed beneath,
The lovers slept the eternal sleep of death !

H. M. J.

SCARLET RECOLLECTIONS

BY SEMPER VIGILANS, B.A.

PART II.—CHAPTER III.

BIPEDS AND QUADRUPEDS.

THERE existed in Ballybrannigan barracks at this period a whist club composed of four members; Captain Bullen, Lieutenant Singleton, Ensign Perry, and your humble servant. Not that we had any particular love for the game, or were any of us good hands at it; but simply for want of something better to do. The rules were delightfully simple:—a meeting of members once a week in each man's rooms, *i. e.*, four meetings per week. Host to provide grog, cards, and smoke. Time of play varying with the weather and the feelings of the members; on wet days, for instance, commencing just after lunch, and going on, save and except during mess, until bed. Stakes—shall I confess it?—limited to sixpence a game, and ten points up! In fact, we played like four old women at long whist, with a sixpence under the candlestick.

“My good fellows,” observed Bullen, when the plan was first proposed, “I’ll join on two conditions:—no trebles in one round, and no gambling. Short whist is like *vingt-un*—a mere excuse for winning or losing,—all very well for the card-room at the ‘Rag,’* or after mess on a guest night, but not the thing for four men who want to amuse themselves, night after night, in a quiet, rational manner, and who ought to be interested in the game for the game’s sake. And then, as to stakes, if *I* kept on winning, you would grow sulky; if *you* kept on winning, I should grow sulky; and if we kept pretty straight, why we might as well play for farthings as guineas, and save all the bother.”

That was just like Bullen. He was a strange fellow for a barracks, but a great favourite notwithstanding. He never smoked, was a teetotaller in all but name, and had a dozen other peculiarities of the same sort. A little man, almost too small for the lowest standard of cavalry officers—and goodness knows we have men small enough in the service!—smooth face, dark black eyes, eye-brows, and hair, the whitest hands and teeth I ever saw in a man, a quick, energetic manner, a sharp twinkle of the eye, a temper never known to be put out, a tongue which was always ready, but never wasteful of its words; a thorough knowledge of and liking

* “The Rag and Famiah,” commonly known as the “Army and Navy Club.”

for his duty (more than can be said for most men in the service or out of it)—there you have him. He had a curious way of making extremes meet. His most intimate associates—I am not referring now to the Ballybrannigan era—were men as unlike himself as it is possible to conceive. He never betted, and yet his greatest crony in the Slashers was a certain sporting sub. named Thacker, the only thorough turfite we had, who occasionally ran his own horses at Punchestown or the Curragh, and would, I verily believe, have thrown up his commission sooner than miss seeing the Derby. In fact, everyone was surprised that Thacker did not sell out when the regiment was ordered abroad; but he packed up and went off with philosophical indifference, explaining that he had been “heavily bitten more than once lately.”

“And change of air does as much good, occasionally, to purse as person,” observed Singleton, who was standing near at the time.

“Besides,” said Delany, “there are such things as garrison races at Malta and Corfu. A man may ruin himself in as neat and gentlemanly a manner in the Mediterranean as anywhere else. I’ve been there, and ought to know.”

Thacker brightened up, and went on board the transport at Kingstown in quite a cheerful frame of mind. His chief regret was at leaving Bullen behind. The parting scene was quite touching. We of the *Depôt* were all gathered on the pier to see the last of our comrades. There had been a grand hob-nobbing in the cuddy over the steward’s sherry and bitter-beer; a grand hand-shaking all round. “All for shore” were safe on shore; and the good ship “Palmerston” was just being “freed from all earthly ties,” as Singleton somewhat profanely quoted from our last Sunday morning’s sermon,—in other words, they were just off—when Thacker appeared again in the gangway, with Nipper, his bull-terrier and especial pet, in his arms.

“Here, Bully, my dear boy, take him. I must leave you something, and I know you’ll take care of him for my sake, won’t you? Good-bye, Nip—God bless you, old fellow!” And Nip was thrown into the arms of the nearest sailor on the pier, who dropped him like a hot potato; and Thacker was borne away, dividing his blessing apparently between his bull-dog and his friend. So Nip became Bullen’s property, and a curious sight it was to see the dapper trim little captain with a great, slouching, bandy-legged, flat-muzzled, villainous-looking bull-dog at his heels. Nip was an animal to send a lady into fits. Persons and dogs, when in his company, were generally observed to assume as conciliatory an aspect as possible. Thacker used to boast that “once let him (Nip) get a good hold, he would never let go.” His prowess in the rat-killing line was undeniable. But extremes met, as I have

said, in Captain Bullen. He stuck to Nip, and Nip to him. The two were always together. Ladies kept on wondering "whatever that nice man could be thinking of to keep such a horrid brute," and there was generally an underlined postscript to their invitations—"Mind you don't bring that dreadful dog." Sporting friends of the exiled Thacker took another view of the case, and offered the little captain untold sums for the "dreadful dog." Close-cropped, flat-nosed, crooked-legged, tight-trowsered grooms and ostlers, bearing a general family likeness to one another, and to Nip himself, were continually way-laying the captain, with a touch of the hair, and a request "as how the genelman as belonged to that ere little dog" would lend the same for a match with Jimmy Ryan's "Jack," or for the annual benefit at somebody else's rat-pit, in which case "the genelman" might safely "put a tenner" on Nip, and "land it easy." But Bullen would neither give away, nor sell, nor lend. He smiled, shrugged his shoulders, talked of "the parting gift of my most intimate friend," and made as much of Nip as dog could well be made of.

"Though what on earth a nice gentlemanly man like Bullen, who never drinks or smokes, or talks slang, or bets on dogs or horses, or knows a horse when he sees one,—what on earth he has to do with a brute which is only fit for an amateur sporting gent like Thacker,—or, indeed, how he came to be thick with Thacker at all,—I cannot for the life of me make out," summed up Major Beardwood one day, while watching "Bully and Bull," as they were commonly called, go across the barrack yard together. And, indeed, it was a wonder.

But to return to our whist club. Of course Nip was a member. Bully would never have come without Bull. In fact, it would have been a pity if he had, for Singleton also had a dog—so had Perry—so had I; and while we four bipeds battled for the odd trick, the four quadrupeds did a little growling and snapping among themselves on the hearth. Bear in mind, that if it was not cold at Ballybrannigan, it was sure to be damp, or downright wet; and we generally contrived some excuse or other for keeping up a cheerful turf fire, if only for the sake of cheerfulness. It is quite allowable to do any amount of a bull in Ireland, and no one appeared to be surprised even if, on a sunny afternoon, the whist club was discovered with open windows, claret or cold punch, and a blazing fire.

It was for places at this fire that our animals squabbled, until a piece of turf, or anything which came handy, was pitched at them as a gentle reminder to keep quiet. Not for first place, however—that was always conceded to Nip. Dogs are like men; they are exquisitely polite when they cannot help themselves. It was

wonderful how quietly Messrs. Rattler, Grip, and Jerry gave way when his bull-terriership signified a wish to warm his sleek, smooth, dirty-white sides at the fire. Rattler was a good little sandy terrier, belonging to Singleton; Jerry, a big, white, curly poodle, learned in the usual accomplishments of poodles, and subjected to awful periodical tortures in the way of shaving, washing, and combing. Jerry had his combing once a day, his tub once a week, and his shaving once a month, as regularly as clock-work, greatly to the disgust, though a good deal to the gain, of Perry's servant, who grumbled, but got extra pay. Perry had lived through much chaff since he joined, both for having a poodle at all, and, especially, for the way in which he kept the unlucky brute; but Perry was chaff-proof, and quietly informed us all that Jerry's father and forefathers, for I am afraid to say how many generations, had been *protégés* of the house of Perry, and were always kept as poodles should be kept—clean and combed, with lion-like mane, ring on leg, and tuft on tail.

He was a quaint customer, was Perry. He had entered the service comparatively late in life, *i. e.*, he had already tried two other professions. As a boy he had availed himself of the interest of an old uncle, a vice-admiral of the Blue, and served as cadet and midshipman in the navy. Then, growing tired of salt water, he half-decided to turn parson, and got so far on the road as to take his degree at Unity College, Cambridge. Just at that time another uncle, Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Perry, K.C.B., returned from foreign service and an unhealthy governorship. A grateful country placed a commission at his disposal. He offered the same to his nephew, the newly-fledged Bachelor of Arts. The youth accepted, and was duly gazetted ensign in H. M. Royal Slashers. I do not know which predominated most in his character—the midshipman, the Cantab, or subaltern. He was a strange compound of all three. Like Aramis, in the "The Three Musketeers," he constantly declared his intention of resigning ultimately the sword for the gown. "I shall be a parson yet," he would say sometimes, when quizzed for some sage, unshipmanly remark. Truth, however, compels me to own that, except a grave, heavy face, void of all whisker, there was little of the parson about him. He had his serious fits, it is true; but a greater madcap at heart was not to be found in scarlet. The most provoking part of the matter was his serious, respectable face, with its large, innocent eyes, looking as calm and good as could be, while the brain within was hatching all sorts of mischief. Delany used to declare it would be worth a fortune to an Irishman. "Such a phiz would carry the most unlucky spalpeen that ever walked over a bog-full of bad luck." It was an honest, sturdy Saxon face, o; and though its owner was the very reverse of Bullen, no lady's

man at all—blunt in speech, clumsy on his feet, and fonder by far of the mess-room than the boudoir—still he was a prodigious favourite with the fair sex. There was a slight dash of the sailor left about him, and like a gentle taste (only a *gentle*, mind) of the brogue, no woman can resist it. Then he was evidently so careless about pleasing, so thoroughly natural and free from compliments or flimsy chit-chat; so original—that's the word!—that the women took to him, and petted him, much after the same fashion as you will find a slim, delicate girl caressing a great rough, sturdy Newfoundland dog, big enough to eat her. Finally, Perry's grave face was a manly, handsome one—light curly hair, blue eyes, fresh colour—a perfect blonde for a man. There! you have him and his dog complete—Perry and Jerry—two as great characters in Ballybrannigan Barracks as Bully and Bull.

Singleton the reader has known almost from the very beginning of my "Recollections." He and I had been sworn friends and allies from the time that we had pulled together in the Athlone Regatta. He was some three years my senior in age and the service; not very remarkable for anything in particular; a good-humoured, easy-going fellow; pronounced by the sergeant-major to be one of the best soldiers in the regiment (no small praise from such a source); and caring for very little beyond his pipe, which he puffed all day long, his beer, which he drank to the disregard of all other liquors, a newspaper, a hand at whist, a day's shooting, and—oh! yes—and his dog, Rattler. Poor little Rat! he was a sharp-muzzled, smooth, sandy terrier, intelligent beyond belief, and almost "too good to live," as they say of precocious children. Indeed, it proved too true in his case, for his career came to a quick and sudden end. He was run over by a cart, and killed, a few months after I left Ballybrannigan. Rat was a great favourite in barracks. The men all knew him, and he generally marched out with the regiment. He was a constant guest in the guard-room, and, curiously enough, he never went beyond the barrack-gate unless specially taken by his master, or some of the men. He never associated with any dogs outside, and if a civilian crossed the barrack-yard, Rat was after him, barking, in a moment. Strange dog that he was, he never made friends with any but soldiers, and Singleton declared that Rat liked him best in uniform. Another peculiarity of the animal was his dislike to the bugle. It was his regular custom when any of the calls were being sounded to scamper across the barracks, stand in front of the bugler, stretch out his hind legs, throw up his head, and howl—one long-continued, melancholy yell—until the hated instrument was silent. Often and often have I known Rat do duty with the officer of the day: accompany him round the barracks, visit the sentries, and finish off by sleeping in

the guard-room. Sometimes he came to mess, and at Ballybrannigan he was always accommodated with a chair at the table whenever he saw fit to honour us with his presence. Of course he could sit up, balance pieces of meat on his nose, hold a pipe in his mouth, and go through the usual routine of dog tricks, like his comrade the poodle, Jerry. Singleton, indeed, very narrowly escaped a serious row at the station where we were quartered before the regiment went abroad. He had seen fit, along with Delany and Perry, and, in fact, at Perry's instigation, to dress Master Rat in a little black gown and imitation bands; and in this guise the animal was sitting up, to the uncontrolled merriment of the three subs., when the chaplain entered the mess-room. Unfortunately, he took the joke as a personal insult, and being by no means of a long-suffering disposition, delivered a severe rebuke to his supposed tormentors. They could do nothing but laugh. The chaplain stalked away in high dudgeon, and reported the affair to the colonel. Singleton, in consequence, passed through a good deal of explanation and apology before matters were made straight. I need not say that the joke went round the barracks, and made Rat a more notorious character than before. Poor little dog! he well deserves a place in my "Recollections," and he has it.

Bully and Bull, Perry and Jerry, Singleton and Rat;—there only remain to be described Lieutenant Tombs, and his dog Grip. The former I leave to the reader's own sagacious judgment; for the latter I claim a little notice, as being a faithful servant for many years, dying at last of old age, *sans peur et sans reproche*. Alas! I am bound to confess he was only a mongrel, a half-bred rough Scotch terrier, peculiarly ugly, and excessively quarrelsome; but then, you know, there are spots on the sun. He was faithful to the backbone (whatever that means), and never quarrelled with his friends; always slept under my bed; took a bath in the nearest pond or river, of his own accord, every morning; and, considering his natural disadvantages, was a perfect gentleman for cleanliness and self-respect.

I trust the reader is not tired of our whist club, biped and quadruped, for it stands out most prominently in my Ballybrannigan recollections. It became a great institution. All the other members of the mess were admitted on occasions, and even the mighty major condescended more than once to accept its hospitality. It answered more purposes than one. Our mess-room was a cold, draughty, uncomfortable pig-hole, which it was no one's business to make comfortable, and which, indeed, was not worth any trouble or expense; and the so-called cook was a disgrace to his profession, and a dirty-looking disgrace into the bargain. Therefore, it was no unusual thing for the members of the whist club, after a bar-

barian repast of luke-warm leather and dirty puddle—otherwise beef steaks and potato hash—to adjourn to one of their own rooms, and then turn cooks for themselves. Bullen's quarters were generally chosen as being the cosiest in the barracks. For one thing, he had two rooms, or, at least, a sitting-room, and a sort of big closet, just capable of holding a bed and army wash-stand; and then, he had rigged up an immense red curtain, or collection of curtains, which could be drawn at will round three sides of his parlour; the fourth being occupied by two niches for books and a large fire-place. At night, when the curtain was drawn, hiding door, windows, and walls completely, it had an inexpressibly cosy effect. Following out another of his whims, he had none but easy chairs in the room,—partly hired, and one or two, which could be shut up, his own property. Over each of these was flung a bear or fox skin, into which you sank, until little remained on the surface. The ugly wooden mantel-piece had a red, deeply-fringed cover. On the wall above this was a pipe rack, well supplied with stems and bowls of all sizes and patterns, for, though Bullen never smoked, he liked the smell, as he always declared, and, indeed, had his own particular Turkish pipe, some two yards long, which he carefully put to his lips, and smoked *empty* (fact, I assure you!), with the gravest face in the world. Again, though he seldom or never drank more than one glass of wine in the day, there was a small barrel of beer scientifically disposed in one corner to the right of the fire-place, and no less scientifically covered with a stamped and gilt leather case (fact again!), with apertures for the tap and vent-peg, which—the cover, I mean—he had had cut out specially in London, and which made each successive generation of barrels rather an ornament to his room than otherwise. To the left of the fire-place was a sort of open kennel for Nip. Sagacious animals, dogs,—none of the other three ever ventured into it. Finally, our gallant captain had suspended a handsome lamp from the centre of the ceiling, somewhat in ship fashion, and in defiance of the district barrack-master, who never failed to remonstrate whenever he visited Ballybrannigan, and to hint at the heavy bill of damages he would bring in when Bullen should have to change his quarters.

“ ‘Heaps of things to move!’—not at all,” he said, when taken to task on one occasion by the major, for what that worthy was pleased to style his “luxurious nonsense.” “I have learnt how to make a room comfortable with very little. A red curtain, which is folded up in two minutes; iron rod for ditto, put up by local artisan, and left behind as a legacy for the barrack-master; all the chairs hired except two; Nip's bed, lamp, cover for barrel, packed in a quarter of an hour; personal luggage same as that of any other fellow in the barracks;—there you are! Now I tell you

what, major, I'll undertake to be ready for a move in less time than any one of the mess. We'll suppose a marching order to come down all of a sudden, and both start fair from the same hour."

"Done!" said Singleton, abruptly. It was in his quarters we were sitting, and we all laughed, for his furniture and equipments were of simplicity simplest.

"I never bet," rejoined Bullen, "as you all know, but for curiosity's sake I am willing to try. The major shall see fair play, and no one shall touch a stick in either room, except our two selves and servants."

"Agreed," said Singleton.

"Pooh, pooh!" said the major. But, after a minute, he consented; and, sure enough, the innocent wager came off. Two o'clock the next day was the time fixed for the start. The hired furniture and the fixtures in each room were not to be meddled with, of course, but clothes, uniform, books, drawers, camp-chairs, washing apparatus, and all *et ceteras* were to be packed up and deposited in the passage outside, ready to be stowed on an imaginary baggage-waggon. The two servants entered heart and soul into the notion; to some extent, I believe, from an honourable feeling of rivalry, but chiefly, no doubt, from a slight monetary inducement—Bullen having, with some reluctance, agreed that the loser should pay half-a-sovereign to the winner's servant, and five shillings to his own.

The news spread through the barracks, and occasioned a good deal of betting among both officers and men. Let no one wonder—even the ghost of an excitement was welcome at Ballybrannigan. The odds were three to one on Singleton, but Perry and I stuck to Bullen, as much from opposition to Sprouts as anything else. That gentleman was pleased to take a lively sporting interest in the matter, and was so profuse in his offers of long odds on Singleton that we took him several times over, and, as it turned out, the youth lost enough to sober him for some time. Indeed, I would not have taken the cub's money if he had not so persistently bragged of his sporting exploits, and talked about "Aw"—having begun his book for the next year's Derby. I doubt much whether he had ever had a bet before in his life. As it was, he dropped "a tenner," and became a sadder, and, one would hope, a wiser man.

Yes, Bullen won by seven clear minutes. How the operation was effected, I cannot say, for the doors of the rooms were closed until the things were ready for stacking outside. Bullen's servant was a smarter hand than Singleton's, having had a great deal more experience. And Bullen, again, was exquisitely neat and tidy, while Singleton's smaller kit was disposed in most disorderly fashion. We officers were all, from the major downwards, stationed in an adjoining

room, with door wide open; while the other servants and sundry non-commissioned officers and men, who had presumed on the occasion, congregated at the end of the passage, and watched the result most anxiously. A general cheer greeted Bullen and his man as they emerged with the first trunk between them, and so were they welcomed on each fresh re-appearance; while Singleton's anxious and perspiring face peeping out of his door to see what was the matter occasioned such a burst of laughter and ironical applause, that he turned crusty, and would have given in at once, if his servant had not implored him to fight it out "for the honour of the thing." So he did, and came in second, as I have said, by at least seven minutes.

But the cream of the joke was yet to come. The major had given his verdict, with a face more like his own self than we had seen for many a day, and we had duly admired the two heaps of baggage, and examined the desolate rooms, when Bullen quietly observed—

"Now, major, I hope you are satisfied. I have emptied my rooms simply for your satisfaction"—The major looked a little taken aback, but Bullen went on steadily—"You know if it had not been for your remarks yesterday I should not have cleared out in this way. And now that my rooms are empty, I propose that they shall be thoroughly scoured and cleaned. I think the least you can do, under the circumstances, is to give me leave of absence for a few days until things are straight again." The major was fairly taken aback this time. He never granted leave when he could help it. "I am sure," went on Bullen, "you must be gratified at the satisfactory evidence you have had that your officers are ready to start at an hour's notice, even if they dabble in—ahem!—luxurious nonsense. And now, as I have made myself uncomfortable for your satisfaction, I ask a fortnight's leave for my own."

"I tell you what," exclaimed the major: "if you'll clear out of Ballybrannigan, bag and baggage, at the same rate that you've packed up, and without re-arranging a single article, why, you shall have what you want."

Bullen quietly bowed, caught up his over-coat, pointed towards a portmanteau, which his servant immediately shouldered, gave us a general "Good bye, all!" and was off before the major could say another word.

"Well, this is cool!" quoth Singleton. "The villain! He must have arranged it all beforehand. Now, major, and what for me? My room is in as bad a state as Bullen's."

"Go to Bath!" rejoined the major, gruffly, "I am not to be caught twice."

So Bullen actually got a fortnight's leave and good living in Dublin.

But where have I wandered to all this time? I was on the point of describing our club cookery. "Necessity is the mother of invention." We were half-starved, and more than half-poisoned at mess, the only thing eatable, as Delany would have said, being the whiskey. So Bullen invested in sundry pots, a frying-pan, a grid-iron, and a jack for roasting. It was while he was in Dublin, on his fortnight's leave, that he purchased them. Soyer was then rising into fame. He had come over to Dublin, during the famine, some few years before, and made wonderful soups and dishes out of the plainest materials for the benefit of the poor. "Every man his own cook" seemed to be his motto, and we determined it should be ours. We catered for ourselves, attended the Ballybrannigan market—such as it was—wrote to Dublin for hampers of delicacies unknown to local shops, and cooked very eatable dishes in very successful style. To this day I will grill a fowl, toss a pancake, or cook a chop against any amateur, and yet all my culinary skill was acquired at Ballybrannigan. As to Bullen, leaving the lower range of chops and steaks behind, he soared into omelettes, ragouts, and savoury meats, for the sake of which poor Esau would have sold his birth-right ten times over; and though I daresay the very fact of having cooked our own dishes made those said dishes all the more palatable, still I can call independent evidence to our success. The fame of our proceedings spread through the mess. For some time we steadily maintained our privacy, and cooked with doors locked; but at last, when even Singleton could hit the happy moment at which a chop should leave the gridiron, and Bullen had fairly graduated in the cookery-book, we issued invitations for a grand supper. Everyone came, including the major. The table was laid out in Bullen's room, and our guests had the gratification of seeing their supper on, and in front of, the fire, before they ate it. "Liberty Hall, gentlemen—no ceremony and no waiters," said Bullen, by way of welcome. He was girded with an apron, and superintended two pots and a roast at the same time, while Singleton mashed potatoes. Perry drew the corks of a regiment of bottles, and your humble servant cut up a large wedge of cheese preparatory to toasting. Our guests fell into the fun of the thing with might and main. They would have turned cooks themselves if we had allowed them. We sat down nine in number, and our bill of fare included grilled fowls with mushrooms, a dish of wild duck, stewed steak, served up with carrots and turnips, and a deviled leg of mutton. This last was Bullen's great triumph. Would you like to know the recipe? Let the mutton be well kept and hung. Run

it through and through with a carving-knife, carefully avoiding to gash the skin more than absolutely necessary. Then rub in plenty of mustard, pepper, and salt, and cover it with the same outside. Roast it slowly before the fire, adding more mustard and pepper from time to time. If done carefully and properly, it will not only be brown and crisp and savoury on the surface, but each slice will look and taste as if it had been separately "devilled." It is a *thirsty* dish, and one suited to tropical palates; but a stunning good one. We cleared the particular leg in question to the bone, and drank Bullen's health with a cordial vote of thanks. The fowls and wild-duck nearly vanished; the stewed steak was not forgotten. Then followed toasted cheese; and then we gathered round the fire, in front of which now stood a bowl of steaming milk-punch, the special work of Perry, who retired to his own room to put the finishing touches to its concoction, and reappeared with the fragrant bowl just as we had pushed away the table, lighted pipes, and cleared the hearth from all encumbrances. The major was in high good humour, and openly declared he had not fared so well since he came to Ballybrannigan—a sentiment in which all our other guests concurred.

"Poor dear major!" as Rouse, our chaplain at Buttevant, used to say. By the way, he called everybody "poor dear," especially his wife, so that "poor dear Mrs. Rouse" was known through all the mess-rooms in Ireland. They were never seen together except by mistake, as he was always out of his house, and she always in it. "Well, Rouse, how do you do? and how is your wife?—coldish weather for her, eh?" "Oh, poor dear woman, she is only so so; easterly winds, you know." I am sorry to say that Mrs. Rouse and the major were not on the best of terms when we were quartered at Buttevant. She had heard of his propensity to strong language; "heard," I say, for Major Beardwood was too much of a gentleman to break out before a lady, and a clergyman's wife to boot. However, Mrs. Rouse had heard, and that was enough. Unknown to her husband, she sent him a polite little note, enclosing a tract on swearing (twenty for a shilling or four-and-sixpence a hundred), with a "fervent hope" that he would "attentively read, and lay it to heart." The major waxed purple with inarticulate fury, and when he recovered his powers of speech, said more naughty things than there were actually words in the tract itself; in fact, his rage got the better of his discretion. Obeying a rash impulse, he tore both letter and tract in two, and threw the fragments on the floor. Some one picked them up, and *literally* put two and two together, so that all the garrison, and a few other garrisons besides, soon knew that Mrs. Rouse had sent a tract on bad language to old Beardy. "That disgusting woman" was the

best name he had for her afterwards, while Mrs. Rouse used to sigh over "that profane major," and, good woman that she was, seemed really more grieved at his bad habit than he at all deserved. But "poor dear major," I call him, after Mr. Rouse's example, when I think what pains he took to keep up his dignity at Ballybrannigan, and with what bad success. He never could or would understand that there was such a thing as undignified dignity; or, rather, that dignity is never so undignified as when it thrusts itself before everybody's face, and demands homage. He was so sensitively afraid of any slight, and so perpetually fancying himself slighted, that you were irresistibly reminded of the fable of the donkey in the lion's skin: Major Beardwood *would* bray. For instance, he had so far forgotten himself and his dignity as to be actually pleasant on more than one occasion. He had laughed at some of Sprouts's absurdities, and even winked at one or two little jokes which we played on that young gentlemen. He had taken almost a boyish interest in the wager between Bullen and Singleton, and had been so easily beguiled by the former into granting leave as to warrant a belief that he had positively no objection to the beguilement. Nay, he had actually attempted a vile pun on the occasion: "One must put up with a little bullying from our friend Bully, you know, gentlemen!" at which we had all tried to laugh. And then he had been overwhelmingly civil and jovial at our whist-club supper, as related above. Poor dear man! whatever induced him to be so afraid of his dignity being compromised by these little unbendings? At all events, within a week after the supper, he became so crusty and savage as to be quite unbearable. He bullied the men out of their lives, inflicted the heaviest punishments he could for the most trifling offences; prolonged parades beyond all bounds, and marched us out with a reckless disregard of shoe-leather, and the grumblings of the whole Depôt. Towards the mess he played the "heavy, severe parent," in a pompous and patronising manner, which provoked even the quiet Captain Petrie. He growled, and scolded, and laid down the law, until he cleared the mess-room, and had no one to bully except the waiters; and, goodness knows, they and the cook deserved all they got! But the finishing touch of all was one day when he favoured us with a description of the way the officers messed in the French service,—the lieutenants having a table to themselves, the captains another, and so on.

"Capital arrangement!" concluded the major, looking hard at Singleton and myself; "admirable plan for promoting discipline, and teaching the younger officers proper respect for their superiors. Wish we had something of the sort in our own service!"

"In which case," observed Bullen, in that soft, silky voice of

his, and showing his teeth with a smile which made it so difficult to quarrel with him at the very moment when he said the most biting things,—“in which case, my dear major, you would have fared but badly at the time when I dined with the 169th at Plymouth, some years ago. You were, if I mistake not, a lieutenant of sixteen years' standing, with five captains in the regiment junior to yourself in years and service. Don't you think you would have found the French system somewhat unpleasant, eh?”

That same evening, when we of the whist-club were gathered together in Bullen's room, we solemnly formed ourselves into committee to consider the conduct of the commanding officer; on which occasion it was proposed by Lieutenant Singleton, seconded by Lieutenant Tombs, and carried unanimously, that Major Beardwood, having been guilty of words and actions tending to disturb the harmony and good-will which ought to exist in the barracks, and especially in the mess, he, the said Major Beardwood, should be formally expelled from his present position of honorary member and visitor of the Ballybrannigan whist-club, and be no more invited to any of its meetings or suppers; a sentence which, however the major would have “pooh-poohed” if he had heard it, lost him no little pleasure in the eating line, though I say it who ought not.

CHAPTER IV.

A SERMON AND A STORY.

I BEGAN to keep a journal in those days.

That piece of information must stand as a separate paragraph, for a reason. I call it an important era in a man's life when he begins to plague himself with that most frightful incubus, a daily journal. Sinbad's “Old Man” is nothing to a diary! You begin it with the fixed determination to spend a quarter of an hour every evening in jotting down the events of the day. Of course, after a little while, you get behind-hand, and have two or three days to account for, instead of one. You are tired of a night: “To-morrow will do just as well.” Then to-morrow flies past in some mysterious manner; and the next day (to quote my own case at Ballybrannigan) there is a march out, and a meeting of the whist-club: while on Friday you are orderly officer for the day, and in for no end of duty. And so it gets to Saturday, and there is a whole week to account for. Oh, the racking of brain and straining of thought, and puzzling over this day and that, to fill up those back pages! And yet it must be done. Once commenced, you feel you must go on. You have quite a nervous horror at the idea of leaving a day or a week unaccounted for—although I testify,

from my own experience, there is not a more useless thing in life than a diary—at any rate, to yourself. Of course, if your career is a very eventful one, and cast in many lands, your children and grandchildren may find amusement in reading your memoirs; but, in that case, you had better write and publish a book at once. But as to jotting down the thousand-and-one little nothings which make up an ordinary life from day to day, it is rank nonsense. You never want them; you never read them. Your journal-books accumulate, and are not worth the actual keeping. They are not interesting enough, or sufficiently well-written, for any one's eyes but your own; and, indeed, you have probably chronicled many things which you would not like any one else to see, and the very record of which keeps you in a perpetual fidget, for fear of its being lost; while, silly body that you are! you cannot summon up sufficient resolution to throw your journal into the fire, and journal-keeping to the winds, but go on writing and hoarding rubbish—waste of time to compile, and bore to keep!

I am waxing warm; but I point my own moral, and adorn my own tale. At the present moment I have some half-dozen journal, books under lock and key, the filling of which has cost me more labour than I care or dare to calculate. "Don't I find them useful in writing these 'Recollections?'" No; I don't. Memory is quite sufficient. I believe that the whole system of journal-keeping, memorandum-jotting, and the like, is a bad thing for the mental powers. It is only an excuse for making memory lazy, and shifting on to paper what should be carried in the head. Consequence is, you trust your diary or memorandum-book implicitly, and if you forget to jot a thing down, come to grief. "You don't believe it?" Well and good; my lecture is wasted, that is all.

The reason I mention my journal is this. I have, for a wonder, been looking it over, and amidst a mass of nothings chronicled at Ballybrannigan (no wonder!—there was nothing else to chronicle), I find the following:—

"*Sunday, 9th.*—Letters from home: all well. Church colder than ever. Had to go to bed afterwards with a bad cold. Perry sat with me. He told me the Cambridge Gyp's story. Stayed in bed all day."

I remember the Sunday well. We had no regular military chaplain at Ballybrannigan, but the men were marched to the parish church, and sat on wooden benches in the aisles—for what reason I cannot imagine, for half the pews were always empty—while we officers were accommodated with a pew at the back, near a leaky door, through which the wind whistled all service-time, "until," as Singleton remarked, "one couldn't even go to sleep in comfort." It was the coldest and emptiest of all cold and empty

churches, the dreariest of all dreary services. High, square wooden boxes ; great galleries overhead ; a huge pulpit and reading-desk right in front of the communion-table, and so completely hiding it that when the clergyman read the Commandments he might as well have stood in the churchyard ; about fifty people in the boxes, twenty more in the galleries, and our non-commissioned officers and men in the pit—I beg pardon, the aisles. Poor beggars ! no wonder there was a cheer whenever it rained, and they were dismissed at once from parade, instead of being marched to church. The rector had a fearful brogue, and read the prayers at a slow, funereal pace, assisted in the “ *Amens* ” by a clerk, and by Major Beardwood, who made up for any irreverence outside the building by a large amount of loud devotion within it. There was no singing, except a couple of hymns which a select choir in the gallery had to themselves, their only musical instrument being a pitch-pipe, on which the leader blew the key-note at the beginning of every verse, the clerk giving out each separately—and the way they quavered was a caution. As to the sermon, the less said the better. I wish the preacher had followed the same rule. For some Sundays after we came to Ballybrannigan, he favoured us with staves of from forty-five to fifty minutes each ; but the major hinted that he should be under the painful necessity of marching the men home to dinner before the third division of the next Sunday’s discourse ; so, after that, we only got half-an-hour. I never heard of a soldier changing his creed, and I think the rector might have made himself personally acquainted with the religious tendencies of all his civilian congregation with very little trouble, for there were not more than two hundred Protestants in all Ballybrannigan outside the barracks. Perhaps, however, he was afraid of their being overwhelmed by the mass of Romanism about them, or, poor man, had no other ideas handy. At any rate his sermons were—all of them—furious harangues against Popery, so highly flavoured that I am sure he might have tried Major Beardwood’s recipe for bad temper with great advantage. A good fit of swearing would have done him a world of good. Indeed, we soldiers may be sad dogs in our way, though not, I protest, so black as commonly painted ; but I should not like to carry so much “ hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness,” under my jacket, as seemed to exist inside the black gown of the Rev. Michael O’Connor, rector of the parish of Ballybrannigan !

“ How do you like our parson, Bill ? ” I overheard one of our men ask a comrade a few weeks after we got into barracks.

“ Well, he’s not a bad hand at a jaw,” was the reply, “ but he *cusses uncommon*, don’t he ? ”

If he had spent his time in telling us how to be better men

for this world and another, instead of thundering over our heads at our next-door neighbours, I think he would have done more good. And, with all due apologies for meddling in business not strictly my own, I humbly commend the same idea to many other parsons I have "sat under"—that is the phrase, isn't it?—both at home and abroad, from that day to this. Showing a man the errors of Romanism will not make him a good Protestant, though it may turn him into a prejudiced bigot; and I have a dim sort of notion that many a poor sinner would get straighter and more surely to Heaven by minding his own path than by pitching into his neighbour's. There—there—there! stop preaching, Mr. Tombs, your pen is running away with you!

Cute and wide-a-woke, however, was the Reverend Michael. He had a collection, of course, every Sunday,* and before the sermon, too. The collecting-boxes had handles at least a yard long, and were, just for all the world, like warming-pans with part of the lid cut off. Singleton, indeed, half-persuaded Sprouts that the seats were warmed in the middle of the service, and the youth nearly rose when the box was protruded into the pew. I suppose the rector thought if his congregation gave little before the sermon, they would certainly give nothing after it. On a similar principle, though acting in an opposite way, all the Irish world knows that the dean and chapter of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, have placed the anthem at the end of the sermon, compelling the people to swallow the latter for the sake of the former. I am afraid the warming-pan got little out of the officers' pew at Ballybrannigan. A soldier is never expected to have money about him. Though, if money would have softened the rector's heart, and made him dock his sermons, we would cheerfully have taxed ourselves, all round, every Sunday.

There it was, in Ballybrannigan parish church, that I caught cold, as my journal states. Caught cold! I wonder who could help it? There was wind everywhere. The woodwork, both of doors and windows, had warped, and shrunk, and decayed. There were all sorts of grids and gratings in the aisles, suggestive of vaults and coffins and unknown horrors below; suggestive, also, of blasts of damp air, which came up from underneath, and joined their sister draughts around. The plaster on the walls was discoloured and blistered with the rivulets of water which trickled down from the leaky roof overhead; while the cracks in the ceiling looked like a Bradshaw's railway map, so curiously and intricately did they cross one another. And the pews—faugh! The sides were stuffed and covered with green

* There is always a Sunday morning collection in every church in Ireland, and in many churches one in the evening, too.

baize, but both stuffing and baize were old, and villainously musty, and suggestive of everything which creeps. The cushions were damp, and the matting on the floor worn into strings, which caught your feet and entangled you unpleasantly. Who could help taking cold, I repeat? There used to be a regular chorus of coughs and wheezes, and blowing of noses, kept up all through the sermon, especially when the Reverend Michael finished a particularly fervid denunciation of the "scarlet woman on seven hills,"—a favourite phrase—and blew his own nose, which he did in a voluminous red pocket-handkerchief, and with a flourish of trumpets which echoed through the church, inviting competition.

I came back to barracks, on the Sunday in question, thoroughly chilled, and went straight to bed. The doctor popped his head in and advised warmth outwardly and inwardly. To carry out the first prescription I had a roaring fire and plenty of bed-clothes; and, for the latter part, a jug of steaming rum-punch which Perry brewed, in his capacity of toddy-maker to the whist-club, and then assisted me in drinking. Grip perched himself on the bed at my feet, by special permission, and showed his sympathy by occasional tail-waggings; and Jerry, the poodle, got as near to the fire as he conveniently could, evidently under the impression that it had been lighted for his sole comfort and benefit; for Perry's servant, being excused from church parade, had seized the opportunity to put master Jerry through his daily combing, weekly washing, and monthly shaving all together, and the poor animal, no doubt, felt as he looked—naked and damp.

How the conversation got twisted from grumbles at Ballybrannigan and things in general to Cambridge and Perry's experiences there, I cannot now remember; but somehow it did. Cold and the Reverend Michael had put my companion into his parson-ical mood, for, be it remembered, he had three characters—middy, bachelor of arts, and ensign—and changed, chameleon-like, from one to the other, as the whim seized him. Thus it was that he came to relate, and I to hear, the Cambridge Gyp's story, as my journal chronicles. I want no journal, however, to remind me of the fact, for so interested did I get in the narrative that I spent nearly all the next day in writing it down, as well as I could, from memory, my cold being still so bad as to keep me indoors. By the way, it was my first literary attempt, and cost me no end of trouble. Such as it is, the reader shall have it, without further preface.

N.B.—It must be understood that Perry is supposed to be speaking.

"There was a small hotel—inn if you like—in the suburbs of Cambridge, kept by a quondam gyp of St. Mary's, an honest, good-hearted fellow, Jack Gossett. In the cosiest of all cosy parlours a

certain set of us never failed, about once a fortnight or so, to try Jack's grills and rarebits, with the best tap in Cambridge. And here it was that I listened to the following history, which I give, as near as I can remember, in our host's own words:—

“‘I was gyp and waiter in Hall at St. Mary's for nearly twelve years—aye, it can't be far off—and a many pleasant free-handed young gentlemen I waited upon. It used to be more of an aristocratic college, I fancy, than it is now; at least there were few came up to it as weren't well-to-do good old families, and so on. Let me see, there were the Fothergills, of Essex; fine set that was, and wonderful hands at making away with money. I recollect young Edward Fothergill—him as is member of T——. That was in forty-eight. And there were the Markhams, too ———”

“‘Confound it, Jack! cut the “good old families,” and go on.’

“‘Well, I say there were a real nice set of young men up at St. Mary's, and it was a pleasure to wait on them; but of all the agreeable, pleasant, free-spoken masters, give me Mr. Harriott. Eh, dear—poor fellow! I can't bear to think of those times. It is not long ago, either. Let me see, Mr. Perry, you must have been a freshman just after he left, and I am sure you have heard of him often enough. You all know what a stir his hearty face and jolly ways and full pocket made. Lord's sake! we used to have as many as thirty in at a time to supper. Night after night—champagne and moselle, hock and curaçoa, punch and Madeira—you never saw more drinking and goings-on in your life. Many's the time I've waited till near twelve to see a dozen of them back to Unity and St. Jude's; and you'd scarcely believe the rows they kicked up. I don't mean to say but all of you kick up shindies enough now, but I've never seen or heard anything to equal Mr. Harriott. Everyone liked him, for all his scrapes; and I believe the Dean would have had his name off the books in a week if it had been any one else.

“‘Well, you see Mr. Harriott began in this way to be rather fond of his glass. He never was more than screwed—just a little gone, you know,—but he could stand a good deal, for he was an immensely powerful fellow, and, somehow or other, it got to be brandy—brandy—nothing but brandy. There was Mr. Clegg, of Unity, and Mr. Pilling, of St. Mary's, and my master, would sit drinking brandy together by the hour; and the worst of it was, Mr. Harriott always drank the best part of every bottle. I could see it all coming on, gradual like. Never easy without his dram; and first thing of a morning, when I went to call him—“Jack,” he'd say, “brandy and soda; or, wait; bring the brandy alone.” Ah, when a fellow takes to spirits altogether, it is likely to go bad with him!

“ ‘ I left St. Mary’s that summer, and took this berth. Mr. Harriott used to come and sit in that very chair, Mr. Perry, as you’re in now ; and still it was brandy—nothing but brandy. He was for ever going up to London, and nothing would serve him but I must go, too, and take care of him ; but, bless you ! you might as well have tried to stop a runaway express engine. The only thing I could do was to take his purse, when he left the Piazza Hotel ; and while he walked into this café and that casino, I’d just step over to Nat Langham’s and sit a bit ; and by-and-bye, a man would come : “ Mr. Harriott wants you at once ; ” and there, if you’ll believe me, I’d find him owing for a couple of dozen of champagne, and treating every one right and left to what they liked. And many a time I’ve put the purse, with what remained, into his hands, and swore I’d wash my hands of him ; but somehow I never liked to leave him altogether, and generally got him back to Cambridge, not so much the worse as you’d have imagined.’ ”

“ ‘ Besides, Jack, it must have been pretty pickings for you.’ ”

“ ‘ It is all very well for you young gentlemen to talk in that way, but he was a deal of trouble, I can assure you ; and, besides, I had to leave my business all the time. Well, it was at the end of his second October Term, when he drove round here in his curricule—you know his bays, Brett has one of them now. They were a couple of devils to drive ; but he was a splendid whip when he was sober. Well, I saw he had been drinking ; but, thinks I, he’s more likely to do himself a mischief than with me alongside of him ; so up I gets, and the man behind. He drove all right till we turned into the Trumpington-road, at the corner there, by Hobson’s monument, when—would you believe it, Mr. Perry?—with those beasts pulling and chafing fit to break the harness, he gives them a cut, flings the reins over their backs—he did, as I’m here !—and falls back in his seat as if he had done something clever. ”

“ ‘ “ Lord, have mercy on our souls ! ” ’ ” says I ; and the groom, he slipped off behind, and got a sprained ankle for his pains, and away we went like the wind. I never expected to reach the ground alive, but, as luck would have it, we caught against the little stone bridge at the turning, and went over into the hedge. I was so mad that I don’t believe I spoke to him for more than a month ; but this will show how far he was gone. And I used to hear how he went to R——’s—you know where I mean—at the river side, and often enough had to stay there all night, and be brought back to St. Mary’s the next morning. Of course, this couldn’t last, and he was rusticated for two terms. On the night he was to go down, a little lad comes to me and says : “ You’re to go directly to the Tiger. Gentleman ill there.” He was in a fit of delirium-tremens, gentlemen, and I thought it was all up with him.’ ”

"Jack broke off here to refresh himself.

"'It was a long job we had. The nurse dursn't stay in the room by herself. He would throw his arms about, and start up out of bed, and swear and curse most awful, and shriek for brandy till no one would remain in the hotel; and if you listened to his ravings it would make your flesh creep. I used to fancy there were crawling things and faces about me, as I sat by him in the dusk, and him calling to me to take them away. But at last he got better, and I could walk out a bit, for I had scarcely left him, day or night, for a week. He was quieter, and the nurse could sit with him; but, of course, they put their foot in it when my back's turned! He is left alone for a minute. Out he jumps, with just his night-gown and a wrapper on, runs to the window (it was a room over the gateway) and jumps slick out into the street! It was market-day, and as he didn't hurt himself, wonderful to tell, except one foot, I can laugh when I think what a row there must have been among the old women below, when he hopped down among them. Well, we got him back, and he recovered sufficiently to go away, and for some time it quieted him, and, what's more, Mr. Sloth, the tutor at St. Mary's, got a good word in for him with the Master, and they let him come back after Easter—such a wreck of what he was! and, thinks I, surely to goodness he has had a lesson that will serve him for some time to come, at any rate.'

"Here Jack paused. 'I'm afraid it did not, after all?' said one of us.

"'You're right, sir, it didn't. It seemed as though he were twice as bad as before. His doings got so disgraceful that I told him I couldn't and wouldn't go with him to Harston, or anywhere again, nor would I have him here. So we quarrelled like, and parted. But, you know, I wished him just as well as ever. At last Mr. Sloth sends for him and, says he, "Mr. Harriott, if you don't take your name off the books, you must go before a board of the Master and Fellows." He took it off that evening. I was sitting smoking my pipe at that window, when he drives up in a cab. I had heard what had happened, so I went out to see him.

" "'Jack," he says, "I'm off for good. You must come with me. I've not treated you well, but you must come."

" "'Can't, on any account, and shan't," says I.

" "'Jack," he says, catching hold of me, "I'm half mad already. If you don't come, I won't answer for what may happen. By —! I'll kill myself. Just run up with me, and I swear I'll keep quiet."

" "'Well, sir, they—that is, my wife and he—persuaded me between them, and I promised to see him safe to town, on condition he put himself into his friends' hands. You see, he had two

brothers, but they had given him up, as it were; only there was a sister, and this poor girl comes up to London, and stays with her aunt, to see if she can persuade him to go quietly home to the north with her; and, thinks I, if I can but see him off with her from town, I may be doing some good. So up we went, and to the Piazza, as usual. That night and the next morning I kept him sober, and towards afternoon I left him asleep. He was to see his sister at six o'clock, and off I goes for a stroll. First thing I saw when I got back was a hairdresser, a-talking and laughing with the waiter outside his door. I guessed something was amiss, and rushed in. He'd got hold of the cursed brandy-bottle, as usual, and, worse than all, he'd sent for the barber, and—as true as I live—he had got his head shaved! It was no good swearing at him or the waiter—the thing was done.

““ You mustn't go to your sister in this state,” I said. “ Give me her address, and I'll say you're not well, and you shall see her to-morrow.”

““ Not a bit of it. Nothing would keep him, and he was still strong enough to be dangerous. So we took a cab, and set off. It was a West-end square, and as the door opened, I saw the pretty dear herself—yes, you may laugh, but I can't think of that poor girl without feeling downright sorry—I saw her peep round the corner, waiting for him.

““ “ Try to be a man for once, sir,” I whispered. “ Here! give me your arm, and, for mercy's sake! keep steady.”

““ She came forward, holding out her hand. The drunken fool—for he was no better—he staggers forward, gives a yell like a maniac, takes his wig off, pitches it straight at her—straight at her face, as I'm a sinner—and falls headlong down at her feet. She gave such a scream, and out runs an old lady.

““ “ Take him away this instant!” she sings out. “ You vile man, you, to bring him here in this state! You are as bad as he is! Take him away! and, when he's sober, tell him never to come near either his sister or me again!”

““ The girl had fainted, poor thing! Altogether, it was too much. I took him back to the hotel, put the old lady's message down on a bit of paper, told the landlord to do his best for him, and started back to Cambridge by the night mail. I could stand it no longer. And yet, if I'd only known—but, no, it could have made no difference. All the world couldn't have kept him from ruin, I firmly believe.”

“ Jack here made such a long pause that we had to remind him how late it was getting.

““ The fact is,” he resumed at last, “ I never like even to think of what's coming. If it wasn't that I have got so far, I wouldn't finish the story, for, I tell you, it's not pleasant to me. You see, I

got back again here, as I said. Well, I was all uneasy like—couldn't sit still, or rest quiet for the next few days. I'd a sort of presentiment that all was as wrong as it could be; and my wife, she says to me—

““Jack, either go back to him, and worrit yourself as you used to do, or else let him go his own way, and you keep your mind quiet.”

““But, no; I could do nothing but fidget myself and every one about me. At last I called one day on the porter at St. Mary's, and first thing he says is—

““It's all up with young Harriott now, at any rate. He's done for himself, and a good job it has come to something. Mr. Sloth has been telegraphed for, to know what's to be done with him, and he's dying at the hotel there in Covent-garden.”

““I had sufficient money in my pocket for the fare. I didn't go home, but off straight to the station, into the next train, and direct to the Piazza. And there I found him, as near dead as any one could be, and no hope for him in this world. I never left him, gentlemen, afterwards. There was no shouting, or raving. He lay there as quiet as a child. Indeed, he couldn't help himself. He could not move a leg, if it had been for the world; and he had gone down to that degree, you could see every bone in his body. And the face!—may I never see such another again! It was purple—as regular a purple as you ever saw in your life; the cheeks all fallen in; and the eyes!—I tell you there was a fire in them as fairly frightened me to look at.

“““Give him brandy, or anything he asks for,” said the doctor, “he can't last more than a day or two.”

““Mr. Sloth came up. His brothers were sent for, but they wouldn't come near him. As to his sister, I heard afterwards they mercifully kept it all from her, and it is about the only kind thing they did.

““The end came at last. He had been a little more sensible that afternoon, and had talked a bit. He begged our pardon, poor fellow!—aye, that he did—for all his ways, and thanked us. And once or twice he cried out that he hoped God would have mercy upon him, for that he suffered the torments of hell already. And, though I'm not as religious as I should be, I knelt down and read a prayer or two, and he tried to follow me, poor fellow!—yes, he tried to follow me. And then he took a little brandy, and lay quiet. We had to keep the room dark, but as the evening came on we drew up the blind, and let the twilight in. It was a lovely warm night, I remember, and folks were going to the theatre close by, and we could hear them laughing and talking. After a bit nothing would serve him but I must lift up his head, and hold him;

and so I got on the bed, and took him in my arms, and he lay with his head on my shoulder. Oh ! gentlemen, if you could have smelt the hot fumes of brandy that came up from that poor face just under mine ! Suddenly he threw his long, bony arms round my body, and clenched them fast, and slept ; and there I sat, and him holding me tight, and it got darker and darker ; and the man with me, he says, " I'll go and get a drop of tea while he's sleeping ;" and so I was left alone with him. I was wearied myself, and somehow I fell a-thinking, and gradually—it was all so still and solemn—I went into a sort of doze. How long we were there together I don't know. At last, in comes the man again, with a light, and awoke me. Mr. Harriott had me still as tight as ever.

" "Is he sleeping yet ?" says the fellow. " Let's have a look at him."

" "He brings the candle near his face, and touches him.

" " "Good God !" he cries, " he's been dead this hour ; he's as cold as a stone."

" "Gentlemen, I had been sitting all that time in the arms of a dead man ! They could not unclench those hands of his, or take his arms from me, until they had put two men to it. They had to carry me off to bed, and send for the doctor, for it nearly killed me.

" "I had a leaden shell and a coffin made for him, for the doctor warned me he must be buried directly after his death. When I got up it was just in time to follow him to the grave. His brother had come, and told me I might go with him, if I liked. Mr. Perry and gentlemen, they buried the poor fellow in a common pauper's grave, and sent his body in the pauper carriage. I was the only one who put on a piece of crape and a black coat for him. His brother walked after the clergyman, in his ordinary everyday clothes, and a stick in his hand, saw him put in, the earth shovelled over him, and turned away as from a dog. And that death brought several thousand pounds a-year to the family !

" "Pheugh ! let's shake ourselves after this ! And, mother, bring another quart, for I shan't sleep after this story, unless I forget it. Mr. Perry, do sing us a song, and let us talk of something merry for the rest of the evening."

" But we left him, and went home quietly."

SAINT VALENTINE

"Where can the postman be, I say!
 He ought to fly on such a day!
 Of all days in the year, you know,
 It's monstrous rude to be so slow;
 The fellow is exceeding stupid—
 Hark! there he is! oh, the dear Cupid!"

THE history of Saint Valentine, the patron saint of lovers, is wrapped in obscurity. From what little information we can gather about him, it appears that he was a gentle, charitable, benignant bishop of the Church of Rome, blessed with a tongue marvellously persuasive in convincing pagans of the errors of their ways. His zeal met the usual reward of martyrdom, on the 14th of February (being beaten with clubs, and afterwards beheaded), in the reign of Marcus Aurelius Claudius II., at Rome, A.D. 270. Pope Julius (the first of the name) erected a church, called St. Praxedes, to his memory, where the greater part of his remains are preserved, and where a gate (now the *Porta del Popolo*) was formerly named from him *Porta Valentini*.

From the meagre details respecting the most popular saint in the calendar we in vain attempt to discover any affinity between him and the rite by which his memory has been preserved and honoured. Indeed, it is by no means clear how the good bishop became responsible for the flood of tender sentiment that is annually poured forth under the shelter of his venerable name. At Rome, long before the Christian era, there was a festival held in honour of Pan and Juno, about the middle of February. Amidst a variety of ceremonies on this occasion, it was a custom that the young people of both sexes should meet together; the names of the young women were written on scrolls or billets, and then put in a box, from which they were drawn by the men as chance directed, each bachelor devoting himself for twelve months to the service of the lady falling to his lot.

This custom was popular for a long time, but the Christian priests in later ages, St. Francis of Sales, for instance, were much scandalised at the prevalence of such frivolous practices, and were desirous of diverting the thoughts of the people from all vestiges of pagan superstition into a different direction. They did not, however, venture upon abolishing it altogether, but sought to improve the occasion by substituting saintly instead of feminine valentines, each person that drew being expected to imitate the especial excellence of the saint whose name he drew. But the people, finding this not half so exalting, and a great deal more difficult than doing the amiable to a pretty girl, soon returned to their former custom with

greater ardour than ever. It is reasonable to suppose that the above practice of choosing a mate would gradually become reciprocal in the sexes, and that all persons so chosen would be called Valentines, from the day on which the ceremony took place.

In no country has the good saint more devoted followers than among our ancestors. In England the practise of choosing a valentine can be traced back to a very remote period. The poet, John Lydgate, the Monk of Bury, A.D. 1440, in a poem written by him in praise of Queen Catherine, consort to Henry V., says :—

“ Saynt Valentine—of custom yee by yee,
Men have an usance in this regioun,
To loke and serche Cupide's kalendere,
And chosse theyr chosye by grete affectioun.”

One of the earliest known writers of valentines or poetical amorous addresses for this day was Charles, Duke of Orleans, who was taken at the battle of Agincourt, and brought to England, where he remained imprisoned twenty-five years. The following song is one of the many he wrote, all distinguished by delicacy of sentiment and graceful simplicity of style :—

“ Wilt thou be mine ? dear love, reply,—
Sweetly consent, or else deny ;
Whisper softly, none shall know—
Wilt thou be mine, love !—ay or no ?

Spite of fortune, we may be
Happy by one word from thee ;
Life flies swiftly—ere it go,
Wilt thou be mine, love !—ay or no ?”

The following elegant *jeux-d'esprit* is from the “Satyrs of Boileaux Imitated,” 1696 :—

TO DOUNDA, ON VALENTINE'S DAY.

“ Look how, my dear, the feather'd kind,
By mutual caresses joyn'd,
Bill, and seem to teach us too
What we to love and custom owe.

Shall only you and I forbear
To meet, and make a happy pair ?
Shall we alone delay to live ?
This day an age of bliss may give.

But ah ! when I the proffer make,
Still coyly you refuse to take ;
My heart I dedicate in vain,
The too mean present you disdain.

Yet, since the solemn time allows
To choose the object of our vows,
Boldly I dare profess my flame,
Proud to be yours by any name.”

In the French Almanack of 1672, we read :—" Du 14 Fevrier, qui est le propre jour Saint Valentin, on souloit dire—

'Saignée du jour Saint Valentin,
Faict du sang net soir et matin :
Et la saignée du jour devant
Garde de fiebres de tout l'an.' "

St. Valentine's Day is also alluded to by Chaucer, and by Shakespeare, in his play of " Hamlet," where poor Ophelia sings :—

"To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your valentine."

And again, in " A Midsummer Night's Dream," Theseus, on discovering the sleeping quartett of lovers in the wood, exclaims :—

"Good-morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past;
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now."

In the belief that the birds unanimously chose their mates on this day, Drayton wrote thus charmingly :—

" Muse, bid the morn awake,
Sad winter now declines,
Each bird doth choose a mate,
This day's Saint Valentine's;
For that good bishop's sake,
Get up, and let us see
What beauty it shall be
That fortune us assigns.

• • •
Each little bird, this tide,
Doth choose her loved peer,
Which constantly abide
In wedlock 'all the year.
As nature is their guide,
So may we too be true;
This year, no change for new,
As turtle coupled were."

Donne, another poet of the same age, writing an Opithalamium on the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to Frederick, Count Palatine of the Rhine, commences thus :—

" Hail, Bishop Valentine ! whose day this is ;
All the air is thy diocese,
And all the chirping choristers
And other birds are thy parishioners :
Thou marryest every year
The lyric lark, and the grave whispering dove ;
The sparrow, that neglects his life for love,
The household bird with the red stomacher ;
Thou mak'st the blackbird speed as soon
As doth the goldfinch or the halcyon—
This day more cheerfully than ever shine,
This day which might inflame thyself, old Valentine !"

In that faithful and curious record of domestic life in England in the reign of Charles II, "Pepys' Diary," we find some notable illustrations of the custom of choosing valentines. It appears that in his time the married and single were then alike liable to be chosen as a valentine, and that a present was invariably given to the choosing party. In Mr. Pepys' diary for Valentine's Day, 1667, we find the following entry: "This morning came up to my wife's bedside (I being up and dressed myself), little Will Mercer, to be her valentine, and brought her name written upon blue paper in gold letters, done by himself very prettily, and we were both well pleased with it. But I am also this year my wife's valentine, and it will cost me £5, not that I must have laid out if we had not been valentines." Mr. Pepys, in speaking of the jewels of the celebrated Miss Stuart, who became Duchess of Richmond, says: "The Duke of York, being once her valentine, did give her a jewel of about £800; and my Lord Mandeville, her valentine this year, a ring of about £300." The presents were undoubtedly given in order to *relieve* the obligation under which the being drawn as valentine had placed the donors.

Notwithstanding the practice of giving presents to the persons who had drawn others as valentines, it seems to have been a popular notion that the person so drawn had some considerable likelihood of becoming the associate of the party in wedlock. It was also supposed that an influence was inherent in the day, which rendered in some degree binding the lot or chance by which any youth or maid was now led to fix his attention on a person of the opposite sex; for instance, it was imagined that the first unmarried person of the other sex whom one met on St. Valentine's morn in walking abroad, was a destined wife or a destined husband. In illustration of this, Gay remarks:—

"Last Valentine, the day when birds of kind,
Their paramours with mutual chirping find,
I early rose, just at the break of day,
Before the sun had chased the stars away;
A-field I went, amid the morning dew,
To milk my kine (for so should housewife do),
Thee first I spied—and the first swain we see
In spite of fortune, shall our true love be!"

Also, in Swift's "Tale of a Tub," my lady says:—

"This frosty morning we will take the air
About the fields, for I do mean to be
Somebody's valentine, in my velvet gown,
This morning, though it be but a beggarman."

As a faithful valentine was required to maintain the beauty and virtue of his lady, to escort her to all merry-makings, and execute all her commands, it was desirable that the right gentleman should

be paired with the right lady. So there was doubtless plenty of hiding and watching at windows in the early morning by anxious lovers of both sexes. Old John Dunton's "British Apollo" (1780, vol. I) sings a question and answer thus:—

"Why, Valentine's a day to choose
A mistress, and our freedom lose?
May I my reason interpose,
The question with an answer close?
To imitate we have a mind,
And couple with the winged kind."

Herrick, in his "Hesperides," speaking of a bride, says:—

"She must no more a-maying;
Or by *Rose-buds divine*
Who'll be her valentine?"

In the *Connoisseur*, a series of essays published in 1754-6, a fair correspondent gives us the following curious species of divination, as practised on St. Valentine's Eve: "Last Friday was Valentine's Day, and the night before I got five bay-leaves and pinned four of them to the four corners of my pillow, and the fifth to the middle; and then, if I dreamt of my sweetheart, Betty said we should be married before the year was out. But to make it more sure, I boiled an egg hard, and took out the yolk, and filled it with salt; and when I went to bed, eat it shell and all, without speaking or drinking after it. We also wrote our lovers' names upon bits of paper, and rolled them up in clay, and put them in water, and the first that rose up was to be our valentine. Would you think it? Mr. Blossom was my man. I lay a-bed and shut my eyes all the morning till he came to our house; for I would not have seen another man before him for all the world."

In Norfolk it is the custom for children to "catch" each other for valentines; and if there are elderly persons in the house who are likely to be liberal, great care is taken to catch them. The mode of catching is by saying, "Good morrow, Valentine," which they must repeat before they are spoken to. If successful, they are generally rewarded with a small present. It must be done, however, before sunrise; otherwise, instead of a reward they are told they are sunburnt. It is also a popular custom in Northwich for friends and relations to send valentines, not missives overflowing with hearts and darts or poetical posies, but something far more substantial, elegant, and costly; to wit, a goodly present of value, unrestricted in use or expense. Though this practice is openly adopted among relatives and others whose friendship is reciprocated, yet the secret mode of placing a friend in possession of an offering is followed largely; and this is curious to remark, not on the *day* of the saint, when it might be supposed that the appropriateness of the gift would be duly ratified, the virtue of the season being in full vigour,

but on the eve of St. Valentine, when it is fair to presume his charms are not fairly matured. The mode adopted among all classes is that of placing the present on the door-step of the house of the favoured individual, and intimating what is done by a run-round the-corner-knock or ring, as the donor or messenger pleases. "So universal is the custom in this ancient city (Notes and Queries, 1850) that it may be stated with truth some thousands of pounds are annually expended in the purchase of valentine presents." We are inclined to think that this manner of keeping St. Valentine is confined to the county of Norfolk.

In Devonshire the peasants and others believe that if they go to the porch of a church at midnight on the eve of St. Valentine's Day, with some hempseed in his or her hand, and as the clock strike one they proceed homewards, scattering the seed on either side, repeating these lines:—

"Hempseed I sow, hempseed I mow,
She (or he) that will my true love be,
Come rake this hempseed after me,"

his or her true love will be seen behind, raking up the seed just sown—in a winding-sheet.

The following, which is copied from the advertising columns of an American newspaper (*Wooster Democrat*) shows the popularity of St. Valentine's Day, and at the same time the peculiar literature of transatlantic advertisements:—

"The great increase of marriages throughout Wayne Co., during the past year, is said to be occasioned by the superior excellence of the valentines sold by George Howard. Indeed, so complete was his success in this line, that Cupid has again commissioned him as 'great high priest,' of love, courtship, and marriage, and has supplied George with the most complete and perfect assortment of 'Love's armour,' ever before offered to the citizens of Wayne county. During the past year the 'blind god' has centred his thoughts on producing something in the line far surpassing anything he has heretofore issued. And it is with 'feelinks' of the greatest joy that he is able to announce that he has succeeded.

"Behold St. Valentine's Day is coming, and all are seeking for messages to be despatched, under cover of this saint, to friend or foe. They are provided of all kinds, styles, and varieties, ready for use. The turtle-dove kind—with its 'Coo! coo!'—the sensibly sentimental, the cutting and severe, and, in short, everything that can be required, with all necessary fixings. Prices range from six cents to five dollars. Be sure to call on George Howard, and you can be suited to a 't.'"

St. Valentine's Day is now, almost everywhere, a much degenerated festival. The most fatal symptom of its decline and fall is the ridiculous burlesque and sarcastic tone they have of late as-

sumed. At no remote period it was very different. It was then the god of love we honoured; it was the fleet-winged Paphian boy who hovered round us while we wrote, who inspired those charming sonnets, who whispered pretty epithets and synonyms in our ear; and all billets sent on this day only contained courteous professions of attachment from some young man to some young maiden, honeyed with a few compliments to her various perfections, and expressive of a hope that his love might meet with return. But in these days the only observance of any note consists in sending jocular anonymous letters and coloured caricatures to parties whom one wishes to quiz. But still St. Valentine is a time-honoured festival, that *will* not be rooted out by modern over-refinement; and in the middle classes, at all events, if not in the upper, there still exists sentimental and timid lovers who pen valentines, and romantic young ladies who receive them, read them, and are pleased with them, too, in spite of the frowns of fashion.

Long before the advent of the wished-for "14," every print-seller's window becomes a "gallery of pictures," abounding in ridiculous coloured caricatures of the male and female figures; even the itinerant fruit-vendor, and divers other small shopkeepers, speculate on the day, and venture to patronise the fine arts in a gorgeous display, embellishing every available corner with a galaxy of dainty devices. Behold the mischievous young Cupid summoning to his aid the muses of Poetry and Painting. Observe the different designs, graceful and spirited, pensive and winning, intricate and fanciful, yet all most appropriate. Here we have views of Hymen's altar, with Cupids fluttering above the heads of loving couples, undergoing initiation into wedded happiness, fancifully bordered with hearts bleeding if not broken; darts piercing, true lovers' knots, quivers well stocked, and bows well strung, cooing turtles and fat Cupids; again we have groups of scented lilies and pansies, intermingled with violets, myrtles, jessamines, and forget-me-nots, each illustrated by verses, something after the style of the following couplets:—

"The rose is red, the violet's blue,
The pink is sweet, and so are you."

"What can I say or send to prove
To thee my constancy and love?"

"Can pen or ink, or paper show
My fixed and pure affection now?"

Here, again, we have a pure white dove with a solid gold chain round its glossy neck, to which is attached a "billy doo," (*billet doux*) sealed with half a stick of red wax, on which can be traced the words "Ever thine," "Thine till death," fluttering towards a sentimental young gentleman, imposingly attired, and got-up, regardless of expense, in the blackest of black coats, the bluest of blue

vests, and the whitest of white pants. In another corner we have a pictured semblance of a disconsolate maiden, habited in pink book-muslin, with red shoes on her tiny feet, her golden hair flowing dishevelled with the breeze o'er "her bare neck of snow," and a lily-white handkerchief in her lily-white hand, waving adieu towards her departing lover, who is seen clinging to the main-truck of a ship in full sail, spanking through the ocean, which is ruffled by a nor'-wester; a few distant seagulls, visible to the naked eye, complete the scene. Need we say that this pathetic picture is after Braham's "Anchor's Weighed?" But fancy runs riot in the inexhaustible variety of subjects, and, like a fly in a sugar-tub, we are smothered in sweets; the language of the poet and the pencil of the painter provide valentines of all sorts, sizes, and sentiments, to suit every condition of humanity and every variety of *la belle passion*.

A proof that Valentine's Day, though degenerated in one sense, is still the most popular of our festivals, and the extraordinary length to which the custom of valentine letter-writing is carried, may be gathered from the following enumeration—taken from the return of the Postmaster-General—of the letters which passed through the London Post-office on Valentine's Day:—"As in previous years, there was an increase in the number of valentines posted in London, having risen from 494,700 in 1863 and 530,300 in 1864, to the unprecedented number of 542,000 in 1865. As in former years, nearly one-fourth of the whole number posted in London were posted in the Western District. It is also worthy of note, that the valentines sent from London to the country were more than twice as numerous as those from the country to London."

Taking each letter at the least charge, one penny stamp—though most valentines require three or four—see what an enormous sum must be annually spent in postage, not to speak of the cost of the valentines; in London alone it amounts to about £2,258 6s. If the cost of valentines and the postage of all posted in the United Kingdom, and to our colonies and abroad, could be fairly estimated, we think it would not fall short of half-a-million. If a tax of a penny could be made on every valentine made or printed, what a capital thing it would be for the revenue.

In conclusion, we may say 'tis the only day in the year when the postman's knock seems to herald none but pleasant tidings—at least to all the younger and fairer portion of the community; a day on which its sounds sends a flutter of anticipation from the lower regions of the kitchen to the drawing-room above; a day that is eagerly welcomed and looked forward to with delight by thousands of Her Majesty's subjects, from the Giant's Causeway to Cape Clear and from John O'Groat's to Land's End.

MASQUER'S SONG

LADY, ope a languid eye,
 Buy my cresses, cresses buy ;
 Gathered from a leafy nook,
 Bordering on a purling brook.
 Sunbeams haunt the stony grot,
 Edged by pale forget-me-not ;
 Where its arms the bramble flingeth,
 Where the plaintive echo ringeth ;
 Of the cushat's refrain rude,
 Lullaby of callow brood ;
 Minstrelsy of solitude ;
 Or the gush of Philomel,
 Thrills with liquid life the dell.
 There no woe, no care oppresses—
 Buy my cresses, buy my cresses.

Newts nor efts that glen invade,
 Pensive poplars lend a shade ;
 Merry minnows wanton by,
 Bathed in light when sun is high ;
 Prudish primrose steals a glance
 Of its charms in waves that dance
 Elf-like o'er the margin shallow,
 Sigh the rushes, nods the mallow.
 Lady, shake thy golden tresses—
 Buy my cresses, buy my cresses.

Ruby berries fringe the bank
 When the early mists are dank.
 Hark ! the pebbles gaily tinkle,
 Diamond drops the sedges sprinkle.
 Nature opes her fairy casket
 As the flitting swallows bask it ;
 Liquid gems created seem,
 When the wing arrests the stream ;
 Gladsome is the fitful burst,
 While the mavis slaked his thirst ;
 Monarch of the twig and sod,
 Pours his rustic thanks to God ;

MASQUER'S SONG

Such the spot which Flora blesses—
Buy my cresses, buy my cresses.

Veiled the herb with flaky splendour,
Of the meshes frail and slender ;
Spun by spiders' cunning loom,
Hark ! the bittern's sullen boom ;
Tiny sprites *sans* tale or measure,
In this Eden take their pleasure ;
Single heart and eye must be
Such delights to note or see ;
Hie ye, fashion's proud princesses,
To the brook where grow my cresses.

RICHARD CHANDLER.

NEW POEMS BY MATTHEW ARNOLD

NOWADAYS one meets with so much that is turgid and commonplace in thought and expression, that a volume like the one we propose noticing is a positive *bonne bouche*. A calm, contemplative, serious book is this one of Mr. Arnold's, pervaded throughout by deep solemnity and an almost intense sadness. The key-note of his thoughts, sounded in the first poem, is heard to a greater or less extent in all the others.

"Empedocles on Etna" is hardly a dramatic poem, though it is called one by its author. There are no moving incidents in it; it lacks both the shadow and the substance of plot; nor have the characters any specific individuality; and though a tragedy, it hardly contains the elements of a tragedy. The mind of the hero is not fused with the ideas of his own time, but rather with modern ones. Banished from Agrigentum on account of the Sophists, "a lonely man in triple gloom," he lingers

"Alone

On this charred, blackened, melancholy waste,
Crowned by the awful peak, Etna's great mouth,"

giving vent to his thoughts, which are very uniform in their strange sadness and plaintive despondency. He cannot live with men, nor with himself; and so he takes his *quietus* by plunging into the crater. A bald story enough in the hands of any one but a poet; but Mr. Arnold extracts exquisite tones of thought and subtle plays of fancy from this rather barren episode; and yet in these portraiture of men, so oppressed by their thoughts as to be almost slaves to them, one naturally desires a little cheerfulness and hopefulness. The gloom of umbrageous shades, magnificent though they be, is apt to depress, unrelieved by the sunflecks. The forest of Arden resounds with happiness; Jacques' sadness is never wearisome; even Childe Harold is not always lugubrious.

In those severely grand poems of Wordsworth there is always a psalm of hope. Man's life and destinies may not always suggest the brightest and lightest of metaphors; still, a poet—and the greatest of poets have surcharged their most serious contemplations with the highest hopes—must have ample opportunities drawn from his own experiences to paint us the silver on the clouds, and to tint the sacred hours of evening with the glows as well as the shadows of sunset. "The Consecration and the Dream" are rounded with the light of stars, in spite of earth's overhanging mists. The sadness in this book, therefore, often becomes painful, compelling us to long for the fresh breezes of geniality, and for the clear atmo-

sphere of a truer faith in men and in God. Shelley tells us that our "sweetest songs are born of saddest thoughts;" but surely the vigorous, hopeful lays which ought to come naturally to the poet, as well as the sad ones, need not take their rise from melancholy. Perhaps, in our judgment, there is nothing finer in the book than the refrain of Empedocles. It teems with matured thoughts; it suggests strange speculations; it embodies a philosophy; it is an essay on life. The language is coldly clear, incisively exact, and delicately musical; but its perusal makes us sadder and not much wiser, since it imparts no hope to cheer or guide. It is very true that

"Hither and thither spins
The wind-borne mirroring soul,
A thousand glimpses wins,
And never sees a whole;
Looks once, and drives elsewhere,
And leaves its last employ."

But are there not many souls, who, winning a thousand glimpses, see and almost grasp a whole, and carry out their visions into noble action? Those who falter by the way, powerless to achieve their dreams, need not be forcibly reminded of their helplessness; instead, they ought to be cheered by the thought that what man has done, man may do again; and it ought to be the province of the poet to whisper this encouragement. What purpose is served by our being reminded that

"Our shivering heart is mined by secret discontent."
"That in man's brief term
He cannot all things view;"

or,

"That so often here
Happiness mocked our prayer,
I think might make us fear,
A like event elsewhere."

Does the utterance of these dreary truths tend to anything? They are certainly preferable to Miss Braddon's commonplace moralisings or Mr. Trollope's vapid love-letters, but they are hardly the stuff to improve or please either the student or the reader of poetry. Of course, excess of despondency in the book sometimes yields to a little hope; but the hope is so pale and vague as only to bring out the shadows in strongest relief. In the "Two Voices" of the Laureate there is a deal of dreary logic; still the poem concludes with the gladness of "softened airs," "sweet church bells," of a "hidden hope" "so heavenly loved,"

"That in that hour,
From out my sullen heart a power
Broke, like the rainbow from the shower,

So seriously seemed all things wrought,
I marvelled how the mind was brought
To anchor by one gloomy thought."

Compare this climax to the one in Mr. Arnold's refrain—

"I say : fear not ! Life still
Leaves human effort scope,
But, since life teems with ill,
Nurse no extravagant hope ;
Because thou must not dream,
Thou need'st not then despair."

Why must we not dream, if the dream is to do better than we have done, and to be better than what we are? Why may we not nurse visions, if the visions lead us to high aims and noble acts? and what occasion was there to drag despair in the line? No one ought to despair—no one need do so while life and health are spared him. It may be said that these thoughts are those of Empedocles, and not of Mr. Arnold; but all through the volume there is the same sad monotone, the same chastened melancholy, the same pensive despondency. If there exists such a being as a man of cultured mind so stung by the wasps of misfortune, so pierced by the arrows of wretchedness, as to possess a wish to make an end of himself, in all seriousness, the poem of "Empedocles of Etna" would be irresistible in its persuasion to urge him on to his mad act.

In the presence, as it were, of such a fine critic and true poet as Mr. Arnold, it may seem presumptuous on our part to point out what we consider his shortcomings. One of these is an over-fondness to transcribe his moods and feelings into verse. All subjective poets, or those who make poetic capital from what is within them, instead of that which is without them, err in the same respect. It is this self-introspection, reflected in the description of the various heroes of Lord Byron's poems, that detracts somewhat from their wonderful merit. Our own moodiness may present itself to our minds in such a beautiful light as to be worth recording in a lyric. It may even wake similar feelings among those who, subject to despondency, may have read the dolorous verse; but to imagine and then pourtray the mood of another belongs to a higher poetic vision. Is it not worth while occasionally for a poet to leave self out of the question?—for self is apt to grow wearisome, even when confined within the limits of melodious stanzas. Besides, the expression of a mood may be faithful and yet false. It may typify the poet's thought exactly, and yet be at variance with truth. In a piece called "Youth's Agitations," teeming with dolorous music, we are told that only one thing has been lent in common to youth and age—namely, discontent. Now, Mr. Arnold may fully believe this to be a truth. The idea also is so forcibly put

impress readers of a different opinion with its supposed correctness. But is it a truth? The discontent of youth and age are not one. The wild recklessness of the boy, eager to leave his father's field, in order to find or make a way in life, is not the dissatisfaction of the old man who "repines for what is not." So we cannot help remarking that this poem is merely the offspring of a discontented mood of the poet.

In one of the finest of his poems, Mr. Arnold speaks of the

"Haste half work and disarray"

of our day, exemplified especially in works of art. This is a truth which must come home to most of us. With few exceptions, the magazine poetry of the day, and also some of our lately-published volumes of verse, lack the completeness of exquisite finish. Miss Jean Ingelow's "Story of Doom" abounds in weak, slovenly passages, which the limits of this paper prevents us pointing out. Buchanan's "London Poems," though largely imaginative, evincing often the spirit and expression of genius, are filled with commonplace sentiment and meagre verbiage. It seems as if the hurrying spirit of the age has so affected writers as to compel them to compose with undue haste. Instead of waiting for the tranquil approach of thought, they have snatched it anyhow from their brains, and then invested it with the easiest, and often worst possible dress. But we must except Mr. Arnold from these accusations. The tinsel of unmeaning smiles, the grand of extravagant hyperbole, the glare of riotous thoughts, have all no charms for him. If he does not often ascend to the heights of a sublime idea, at all events he never stoops to the level of a commonplace one. If he avoids the splendours of a too ornate diction, he takes care to eschew a puerile utterance. There is no ambiguity or incoherence in his book. If his Pegasus sometimes lacks courage, it never halts; if it is not very swift-footed, it does not suffer from lameness. Mr. Arnold is always lucid, concise, and pointed. His verse is always rounded with chastened elegance and refined simplicity. Everywhere there is evidence of painstaking effort never spent in vain. The poem which we now quote will prove the correctness of our remarks. It is, besides, a fair sample of Mr. Arnold's peculiar genius. Resonant with a sadly subdued wailing, it is still pregnant with apt wisdom delicately couched in clear language.

"A WISH.

"I ask not that my bed of death,
From bands of greedy heirs be free;
For these besiege the latest breath
Of fortune's favoured sons, not me.

I ask not each kind soul to keep
Fearless, when of my death he hears ;
Let those who will, if any, weep ;
There are worse plagues on earth than tears.

I ask but that my death may find
The freedom to my life denied ;
Ask but the folly of mankind,
Then, then at last, to quite my side.

Spare me the whispering, crowded room,
The friends who come, and gape, and go ;
The ceremonious air of gloom—
All that makes death a hideous show.

Nor bring to see me cease to live
Some doctor full of phrase and fame,
To shake his sapient head and give
The ill he cannot cure a name.

Nor fetch, to take the accustom'd toll
Of the poor sinner bound for death,
His brother doctor of the soul,
To canvas, with official breath,

The future and its viewless things—
That undiscovered mystery,
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings,
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he.

Bring none of these, but let me be,
While all around in silence lies,
Moved to the window near, and see
Once more before my dying eyes,

Bathed in the sacred dews of morn,
The wide, aerial landscape spread,—
The world which was ere I was born,
The world which lasts when I am dead ;

Which never was the friend of one,
Nor promised love it could not give,
But lit for all its generous sun,
And lived itself, and made us live.

There let me gaze till I become
In soul with what I gaze on wed,
To feel the universe my home—
To have before my mind, instead

Of the sick room, the mortal strife,
The turmoil for a little breath,
The puff, eternal course of life,
Not human combatings with death.

Thus feeling, gazing, let me grow
 Composed, refresh'd, ennobled, clear ;
 Then willing let my spirit go,
 To work or wait, elsewhere or here."

The poetical student cannot fail to ponder long and thoughtfully upon the clear, well-defined thoughts, and harmonious grades of expression in these verses. The earnest pathos and solemnity pervading them will also deeply touch his heart. The philosophy of the poem may, perhaps, disappoint him ; he may regret that it did not breathe a larger hope and fuller faith, but, unconsciously, he must acknowledge that its sentiments, sprinkled as they are with the waters of Marah, are very happily expressed.

When Mr. Arnold describes, he is almost fluent. He can reproduce the salient features of a scene, or an event, very faithfully and graphically. His colouring may not be rich, but the tones are always pure, and though he cannot invoke thoughts from nature's common objects, "too deep for tears," his refined mind still idealises his descriptions. For instance, how fine this description from "Thyrsis;" the scene is chastened, by the hand of this artist, in words literally transfigured on paper:—

"I know these slopes,—who knows them if not I ?
 But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
 With thorns once studded, old white-blossomed trees,
 Where thick the cowslips grew, and, far descried,
 High-tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,
 Hath since our day put by
 The coronals of long-forgotten time.
 Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,
 And only in the hidden brookside gleam
 Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.
 Where is the girl, who by the boatman's door,
 Above the locks, above the boating throng,
 Unmoor'd our skiff, when, through the Wytham flats,
 Red loosestrife and blond meadowsweet among,
 And darting swallows, and light water-gnats,
 We track'd the shy Thames shore ?
 Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell
 Of our boat passing heav'd the river-grass,
 Saw with suspended cythe to see us pass
 They all are gone, and th' art gone as well !"

In the "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön" Mr. Arnold treads on very high ground, and descants eloquently on the "poet's sphere," as compared with the world of the musician, the painter, and the sculptor. He proves to us that

"Beethoven, Raphael, cannot reach
 The charm which Homer, Shakspeare teach ;"

and that poetry is the highest art, since it comprises all the others. He convinces us that the poet is an artist, since he can mirror nature, and give it form and substance in his verse—a sculptor, on

account of his being able to transmute all lovely images in his descriptions ; and a musician, by reason of his being able to endow all with melodious epithet. Mr. Arnold, in this fine poem, portrays a spiritual insight into the poet's vocation. Unlike Tennyson, when he behoves mankind not to vex the poet's mind with shallow wit, since a poet's mind is not to be fathomed, Mr. Arnold strives to explain to us the reason why a poet's intellect surpasses others, dilating at length on his mission, how

"The movement he must tell of life,
Its pain and pleasure, rest and strife;
His eye must travel down, at full,
The long, unpausing spectacle."

Of course, like Imlac's creation, Mr. Arnold's poet seems almost an impossible person, still many a poet's ideal bard, has appeared to benefit and charm the world, and no doubt, by-and-bye, when men can escape from the fever, hurry, and turmoil of this restless age, and allow themselves time for thought, a *vates*, even such as Mr. Arnold longs for, may, perhaps arise from the calm following the storm.

Mr. Arnold is very successful with his sonnets. These compositions especially suit his peculiar genius, inasmuch as their merit consists in their unity of aim, and their completeness of structure which, after all, is a narrow completeness. Their thoughts, compressed within such close limits, must be exhaustive. No grand poem will suffer the restraint of this composition ; popular sentiment will not endure its trammels. "To be, or not 'to be," would lose its significance comprised in a sonnet. Dobell's and Smith's sonnets on the Crimean War were powerless to arrest the popular sympathies of the time. Thus, Mr. Arnold has had to draw out his ideas on Rachel into three sonnets, reflecting her life and disposition very clearly, in pointed and terse language. What nice observations and good reasoning are embodied in the one called "West London ;" and what fine ideas invests the one entitled "Immortality," though we question its general applicability—

"And he who flagged not in the earthly strife,
From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life."

This is consolatory to the hard-wrought, struggling individual who accomplishes something ; but what of the tired wayfarer who, losing the battle, dies unhonoured and unknown, and whose soul, perhaps, is not so "well-knit" as it might be. Is it not ordained for him to mount to eternal life ? Fine as this sonnet is, we fear it is not cosmopolitan enough in its tendencies to suit the public. How much more pleasing and satisfactory is Mr. Addison's simple idea on this subject,

"Why shrinks the soul
Back on itself, and startles at destruction ?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us ;
'Tis heaven itself that points out a hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man."

When Mr. Arnold descends to love lyrics, he can be as gay and sparkling as a troubadour, and as musical as the author of "The Irish Melodies." The poem called "Calais Sands" is quite a gem in this way. Its beauties are not loosely strung, nor set at random ; it is like all our author's compositions—studied, elegant, and chaste. Of course we should like the glow of earnestness, the fervour of passion, the warmth of spontaneousness in a love lyric ; but the absence of these things still does not detract from the beauty of "Calais Sands," which has its own qualities to recommend it.

The limited space of a magazine paper does not permit us to enter more fully in detail into the characteristics of Mr. Arnold's new poems, which are well worth studying, specially on account of their peculiar thought—thought which to some extent reflects and interprets some of the tendencies of the day. Pervaded as they are with doubt, which sometimes borders on scepticism ; with a cold questioning, which now and then touches on infidelity, the doubt is always real, never assumed, and the questions are poignant, and always suggestive ; and even the gloom which haunts the thoughts never obscures them. Like Milton's "visible darkness," it is a very clear shadow, taking its rise, not always from the problems and mysteries of wretched and unfortunate lives, like the darkness lurking in Mr. Buchanan's writings, but, instead, emanates from the perturbed spirit of the writer. Such a book as the one we have attempted to notice hardly inspires hopefulness ; but, on the other hand, it awakens reflection. The brightness and beauty of external nature do not often find their counterpart in human nature. The loveliness of the external world contrasts, alas, too often, with the terrible glooms of the world around us, and it is only right that in rending the veil of self-complacency, which so often blinds our vision to the drear realities in our midst, we should look at life as it is, instead of dreaming of it as we should like it to be. The truths which our glance may reveal to us may be sad enough, Heaven knows ; still better be alive to them than to the bright falsehoods of the optimist.

ISIDORE G. ASCHER.

G O N E !

"Gone where? Your Damon's 'gone,' you say;
 Pray tell me, Pythias, where is it?
 Timbuctoo, Fiji, or to pay
 The Great Mogul a visit?

It's not 'a long, a last adieu,'
 I hope,—you'd never live without him!
 For my part—well, just *entre nous*,
 I never cared about him."

Thus Clara: but her brother smiled,
 As one who'd seen what, plainly speaking,
 Were symptoms of a certain mild
 Affection known as "sneaking."

Then saying, vaguely, "If you choose
 To crack the nut, you'll find the kernel,"
 Careless began to re-peruse
 The matutinal journal.

"I see," she laughed, "you dreadful tease!
 You've got some odd conceit or quibble,
 Some quip or crank, or what you please
 To call the things you scribble!

Eh, bien! let me try for once,
 Though small my skill in meanings double,
 And, doubtless, but a little dunce
 You'll vote me for my trouble!

Of men who've 'gone to grief' I've read,
 'Skedaddled,' so to say, to sorrow—
 (A Transatlanticism, Fred,
 Which I make bold to borrow.)

Or gone to Bath—is that your whim?
 Or, may be, Jericho's fam'd city!
 (Not 'dead and gone,' I hope, like him
 In poor Ophelia's ditty).

Or, p'rhaps, you simply mean 'gone mad,'
As any hare in March—or hatter?
Or—cross'd in love—'gone to Bath?'
I half suspect this latter."

"No fear," said Fred, "*he* never pin'd
With melancholy green and yellow,
Though somewhat spoonily inclin'd,
He's not *that* sort of fellow.

But, come! I see it's pretty clear,
You'll never guess his destination,
So nerve yourself—you've need—and hear
A 'crushing revelation.'

No wonder he resolv'd to go—
I'm sure quite long enough he'd tarried—
'Gone to the bad,' you think? Well—no,
He's gone for *good*—GONE MARRIED!"

J. B. S.



WAVERNEY COURT

CHAPTER XXVII.

PREPARATIONS.

HOARY-HEADED Father Winter slid away into eternity in his icy kingdom, and was buried in his own mausoleum of snow, and the bright-eyed spring arrayed herself in her flowery garments, and, smiling, went forth to meet her betrothed lover—warm-hearted, impassioned Summer—and died upon his bosom, as he approached to clasp her in his arms. It was, in fact, June again, and the month in which, as had long since been arranged, the wedding of our heroine and Sir Walter was to take place. And Mr. George Wetherby received due notice of the fact, and an earnest entreaty to be present at that interesting ceremony, and to serve as Sir Walter's best man upon the occasion.

Mr. Wetherby accepted this honour with great pleasure, and as the time drew near, suffered considerable perplexity as to what would be a suitable present for the bride. After mature deliberation, and some lengthy consultation with his deaf housekeeper, he came to the conclusion that a time-piece would be as suitable as anything; and so ordered a very handsome ormolu clock, and caused an appropriate inscription to be engraved thereon. This little difficulty being surmounted, Mr. Wetherby got rid of a good deal of his valuable time, and still more precious money, in the ordering of new habiliments, and various other things beside, too numerous to mention.

"Upon my word," muttered the gentleman, as he came to make a rough reckoning of his expenditure. "It is one of the great mercies of life that marriages don't take place more than once or twice in a lady's career, and that I have a limited supply of lady cousins to get married! George Wetherby, my friend, during the last week you have managed to spend something between five-and-

twenty and thirty pounds. Pretty well, I fancy, out of an income resulting from one's own professional labours of nothing a-year. By-and-bye, too, I suppose there will be a baby, and, of course, I shall be asked to stand godfather, and then—heaven preserve me!—there'll be a nice little rattle to buy—coral set with silver, of course, nothing less than pure silver will satisfy her ladyship now—and the precious little darling shall bite its charming little gums upon it. It might be worse; the infantile little angels might be my own unhappy offspring; and gad! I don't know what I should do with the little devils and their mamma in Fig-tree-court."

But if these small matters in the way of dress and so forth caused any anxiety and trouble to Mr. Wetherby, what must similar perplexities have caused to Miss Grace Evelyn? to darling Clara and the gushing Flora Phillips, who were to act as bridesmaids!—to all the female community of Waverney, in fact?

What with dress-makers and milliners, and all their numerous satellites, the Rectory was turned into a perfect work-room. Patterns of dresses with grand "slopes" and wondrous "falls" scattered about here; bonnets without their curtains and with them; bonnets all ready for their fair wearers to "try on, dear," before the looking-glass, with the flowers of gaudy hues, and all complete, scattered about there: in short, the poor Rector was driven to take a month or two's shelter in his study, to write sermons enough to last him a twelvemonth, including one on the soul-stirring precept that "Vanity, vanity; all is vanity;" and all in order that he might escape the eternal clatter of female tongues, and the unceasing stitch! stitch!

Yet the kind-hearted old fellow bore all these trials and annoyances most admirably, and never suffered them to ruffle his temper.

"Well, you girls," he would sometimes cry, "and how are you getting on now? Upon my word this is a very pretty thing—this is," taking up some article of female attire. "And, Grace, eh!—you puss!—what do you suppose this jim-crack of a thing must have cost your poor old father, eh?"

"Tell your father to mind his own business, my dear," interposed Mrs. Evelyn, her round face beaming with sunny smiles. "It is no business of *his* what the things cost, is it?"

At which all the ladies would set up such a tittering; and the Rector would rub his hands gleefully, and look from one to the other, just for all the world as though he would like to give them all a hug—the pretty young milliners and dressmakers and all.

"Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he! And so it's no business of your fathers, isn't it, you puss; that is—I mean, your *ladyship*? Well, well have it your own way; you women always will have it your own way. So—he, he!—it's no use my making any suggestion, or

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else" (and here he would stroke his chin, as he contemplated the various articles of finery spread out in profusion before him), "or else I think—yes, I would certainly recommend these young ladies to put on a few more tucks, and another flounce or two, and a fall and a rushin, and a few gussets."

And the Rector, looking a perfect imp of mischief, and his eyes twinkling like two stars, would slap his spouse upon the shoulder, and stoop to give her a hearty kiss.

"Pa," cries Grace, blushing, "I am really quite ashamed of you, I am."

"And so am I, my dear; yes, Andrew, I am perfectly ashamed of you going on like this before these young ladies. Whatever they will think of you, I don't know," added Mrs. Evelyn, almost blushing also.

But if she *was* "perfectly ashamed" of her husband, she did not certainly look perfectly displeased with him; and as soon as ever the inquisitive and meddling old fellow had stalked out of the room, making the bunch of seals which hung at his waistcoat rattle with the buoyancy of his motions, Mrs. Evelyn would apologise to the giggling damsels for her husband's rudeness.

"You mustn't mind what he says, my dears; he doesn't mean any harm; it's only his way—that is all."

But even the Rector himself confessed that all the weary labours of the young ladies, and all the anxieties and "tryings on" on the part of Grace, were fully rewarded by their results when he beheld the magnificent panoply of white lace and other costly materials in which the blushing bride was to be led to the altar.

Mrs. Evelyn herself was the only person who shook her head ominously, and did not appear quite satisfied with the dress. There was something of Mrs. Primrose about Mrs. Evelyn, and she, like that lady, would have chosen those dresses "which wear well." There was rather too much of flimsy adornment about this glorious garment to please her. If, now, the wedding-dress was but an ornament for the wedding-cake, all would have been well; but, psha! my dear madam, what did all this signify to my Lady Lee? And if Lady Lee could not afford to be married in a vestment which she could wear no more afterwards—who, pray, in all Waverney could do so?

As for Sir Walter Lee, it is impossible to say how he was getting on all this time, because, as the reader is aware, that gentleman had some secrets of which even the almost omniscient author is ignorant; but there can be no doubt that these interesting months between his offer of marriage and its consummation were passed with at least the ordinary anxieties and longings on his part.

About a month or so after the formal declaration of love, of

which Dent and the young barrister had been unintentional witnesses, Sir Walter Lee, somewhat to the surprise of the Rector's family, found it necessary to go for a short trip to Paris. If he had any other object than that of pleasure in visiting this gay city, he did not reveal it. Perhaps it was hardly *comme il faut* for a gentleman who had just proposed to a lady, and been accepted, to be so eager to quit his intended's side, even for a week; and perhaps Miss Grace, not unnaturally, felt a trifle piqued at such behaviour; certainly, her mamma thought it rather "singular." Singular, or not, however, there he went.

But if the ladies did not quite like all this, they were easily pacified upon his return. Sir Walter brought home such a splendid shawl for Mrs. Evelyn, and such a magnificent set of pearls for Grace—the very same, in fact, that she was going to wear on her wedding-day—that it was utterly impossible to cherish an angry feeling against him. At all events, Sir Walter had been most attentive.

As the time drew nigh when Sir Walter was to be united to Grace, certainly he became nervous, anxious, restless, fidgetty. The gentleman had something upon his conscience which the contemplation of his nuptials with Grace seemed to disturb.

Whatever were the sentiments, fears, misgivings of Sir Walter Lee, to Grace he was ever most kind and attentive. If he had any doubts or dreads that a shadow was overhanging his destiny, to her he told them not, but breathed only hopes of happiness. It was a pleasant sight to see these two rambling of an evening in the cool shade of the romantic lanes with which Waverney abounded, bending over the beautiful girl at his side, her hand in one of his, while with the other he clasped her slender waist. And there, with his light, chestnut-coloured hair, curling naturally and mingling with hers, with his soft blue eyes, looking all love and tenderness, free to the search of hers, which gazed so trustingly into their very depths.

Ah! with what a pure and holy love did Grace endow him! With what reverence did she listen to every syllable he uttered! With what delight did she greet every foolish little pun or small witticism he made! Was it not ineffable rapture to be near him; to hear him speak, still more to hear him vow and call Heaven to witness how he loved her? Could it be possible that such a being as this was ought to the confiding girl than the glowing picture of him her fancy painted? She never stopped to ask herself this question. Had she done so, she would have dismissed it instantly, as impossible, from her mind. Was he not the man she loved, and who was to be her husband?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WEDDING.

THE anxiously-looked-for day approached, which was to elevate Grace Evelyn to the rank and title of Lady Lee. To Grace, that time was one of changing anxiety and sorrow, and hope, and happiness. At one moment she would be seeking the solitude of her own little room—the room which she was soon to leave for ever—the room with which all her earlier recollections were associated, where she had slept in childhood, where she had slept out the nights which changed her, a school-girl, into a blooming woman.

What she felt about leaving her little room, she felt about leaving the old Rectory itself. It was true that Waverney Court was much larger and grander, and that she was going to be mistress of it, to rule over it, just as she willed. But still, a new home isn't an old home. Waverney Court, with all its grandeur, was simply not the dear old humble Rectory, the home of her childhood, and dear to her on that account. Then, on the other hand, it was certainly very pleasant to be a lady—not a mere lady by courtesy, as Mrs. Phillips and Mrs. Barber were—but a real *bona fide* lady by title, the lady of a baronet, and to have all the world call her so.

Wouldn't either of the Miss Phillips's—who were to be bridesmaids—wouldn't either of them have given her very ears to be such a distinguished personage? The young and impulsive Flora had frankly confessed that she would. Yet Grace was a good girl, and not envious, neither willing to triumph over others because she was raised by good fortune above them. So she quickly dismissed this item on the *per-contra* side from the account, as unworthy of her and even wicked to contemplate.

Then, to leave her dear father—that father who was so kind to her, who chid her for her little faults so tenderly, who was always so eager to anticipate her wishes, and to make her happy. To leave her good-natured mother—that mother who, with all her little weaknesses, was indeed a good and careful mother—was it not painful to think upon, and to know that it must soon come to pass? There was, however, one view of the case which consoled her greatly, and upon which she dwelt longer and more lovingly.

If she were going to leave her father and mother, was she not going to the protection of one whose arm was stronger than his and more tender than hers. Was she not to exchange her parents for her husband—a husband, whose single endeavour would be to make her life happy, and her hours flow pleasantly by.

With Mrs. Evelyn and his wife, the coming event was not un-

mixed with care and sadness. The gentleman kept his feelings to himself pretty well. Not so, however, Mrs. Evelyn. The continual lay sermons she thought it incumbent upon herself to deliver, for her daughter's advantage, sufficiently showed how much the subject dwelt upon her mind, and the not unfrequent and deep-drawn sighs she uttered at all times of the day, were good testimony to the unwillingness with which she suffered Grace to leave her. The baronetcy and its appendages, as well as the not unmotherly opinion that Sir Walter positively doated upon her child, was at least as great a palliative to her reluctance as it was to the girl. There are few ladies in Mrs. Evelyn's position who would not have felt as much gratified pride as she.

"Really, my dear Mrs. Evelyn, Grace is a very fortunate girl, to have got such a chance, and you have really very much to be grateful for, that she is likely to be settled so well. I can tell you this, I hope my darling Clara will be so lucky. Oh, my dear, if you only knew how fond that dear girl is of Grace!"

And Mrs. Phillips, who had come over to the Rectory for the purpose of getting some further information of the wedding, clasped her hands and turned up her eyes with emotion.

Mrs. Evelyn met this gushing peroration with a dry, caustic cough.

"Yes ma'am, Grace is a lucky girl for that matter, and so I tell her. Ah! Mrs. Phillips," here was a tremendous sigh, "I always slaved to bring that girl up properly, I have!"

"That, dear, I am sure you have," responded Mrs. Phillips, sympathetically.

"Yes, ma'am, yes; it is very true. But I have had my reward at last, Mrs. Phillips. Grace will make a good useful woman, my dear, able to turn her hand to anything, that I *can* say of her."

"Grace is a dear good girl, Mrs. Evelyn, as I have always said of her, and so I always *will* say."

"So she is, ma'am, so she is;" returned the proud mother, nodding her head, and looking very well satisfied withal, but rather afraid of giving her daughter too much praise. "And, ma'am," she added, in an undertone, "she can make a pudding, or roast a joint as well as I can. Sir Walter, my dear, will have no call to be ashamed of her, that I can tell him; and I fancy, ma'am, I'm a pretty good judge of what a woman ought to be."

"That you *are*, dear, that you are;" Mrs. Phillips rejoined eagerly. In such good-humour did this lady appear to be, that she seemed willing to agree with anything.

Mrs. Evelyn was evidently flattered.

"And, my dear, when I look around me," she said, looking around her, and very severely too; "when I look around me, and

see what helpless, finiking, fiddle-faddle creatures, the girls are now-a-days—girls? There are no girls now, ma'am; they call themselves young ladies, and pretty minxes they are too; it is something to feel, my dear, that one has brought her daughter up to be a *woman*—a woman who can mend, and darn, and cook her husband's dinner, if need be——"

"Well," said Mrs. Phillips, after a pause. "I am very glad for your sake, dear, and Grace's, that things have turned out as they have; and I do hope and trust she may be happy."

"Yet, ma'am, it goes against me to part with her, poor child, for all that; she's always been a good and dutiful girl to me, and, and——"

And the worthy lady's strength of mind gave way, and she was forced to put her cambric handkerchief to her eyes, to wipe away the moisture which was gathered there.

Mrs. Phillips laughed very heartily at this, and pooh-poohed terribly; and soon after, having received what information she required, she took her leave.

"What an excessively vulgar and silly person that Mrs. Evelyn is!" she thought, as she swept up her garments to enter the pony-phæton which was standing at the garden-gate.

"Of all the *unfeeling* upstarts that ever I came across in all my life," muttered Mrs. Evelyn, at exactly the same moment, "that Mrs. Phillips is the worst. Thank goodness I am not like her!"

At length the all-eventful day itself arrived. To all whom it concerned, from the bride to the bridesmaid's, from the bridegroom to the bridegroom's man—as the time drew nigh, each moment was fraught with additional interest and importance. One and all,—with the exception, perhaps, of Mr. Wetherby, who slept very tranquilly at his chambers in the Temple, and trusted implicitly to his deaf housekeeper to awake him in time for the early train to Waverney;—one and all, I say, watched eagerly for the first glimpse of the dawn of that ever-memorable day. There were some—amongst them the impulsive Flora—who obtained but little sleep the whole of the night before the breaking of that dawn. And when it *did* dawn, it was as gloomy and unpropitious a sort of dawn as ever shed its gloominess over a wedding-day.

It was indeed a dull, heavy, gloomy, inauspicious morning—a morning upon which a happy couple, of superstitious tendencies, would scarcely care should be their marriage-day. Grace, however, was not particularly superstitious, neither was Sir Walter Lee; so that the lowering aspect of the sky made no great difference to them. Still, when one has taken so much pains, and endured such excruciating anxiety, on the construction of one's grand wedding-dress, one does certainly like the sun to shine when

the time comes to wear it. So far, both Grace and her bridesmaids, and even the elder ladies of the party—as well as all Waverney, in fact—were somewhat mortified.

Mr. George Wetherby made his appearance—leathern travelling-bag in one hand, and a huge case, containing the ormulu timepiece, in the other—in good time, and so as to have a second breakfast before the anxious party went to church.

Somehow, that morning, everybody did his best to look cheerful and lively, as though they were the most jocund creatures in the world, yet no one could by any means prevent himself from looking the most miserable. Everybody talked in whispers, except, once or twice, when George Wetherby ventured upon a laugh, when it sounded so awfully hollow and unnatural, that even he, "with all his recklessness, relapsed into the dismal style of conversing, which was the order of the day.

As for the bride elect, she was an alternation of smiles and tears—the tears predominating—but very sweet tears were they withal. There can be no question that she was rather red about the eyes, to the vexation of her mamma, who was continually contriving expedients to mitigate the same, and who was also somewhat afflicted in the same way herself.

Suddenly the bells of the church struck up such a merry peal as completely startled all Waverney; and then they went on, "Ding, dong, ding, dell!" over and over again, furiously and fast, like mad things, even as they had pealed at the weddings of generation after generation of the children of Waverney, whom, in after times, they had also, to a more solemn cadence, tolled to their last homes beneath the dank grass of the old churchyard.

Exactly as the church clock struck eleven, long after the old church was filled with faces that had been upturned attentively towards our Rector as he sat in his pulpit for a long succession of Sunday mornings, and long after a crowd of boys and girls, fresh from the fields and farmyards—some without shoes, many without hats or bonnets, but all with ruddy faces redolent with health,—were clustered round the gates, the porch, and stately avenue;—exactly as the church-clock struck eleven, the honest rustics set up a shout that even the tremendous ringing of the bells could scarcely stifle; and then, if the reader had been standing anywhere near that porch, he might have seen some very fine white dresses fluttering up the said avenue towards the church in great state. A minute after, the bride, blushing, and trembling, and smiling, and weeping all at the same time, with her pretty bridesmaids and the rest, came sailing into the porch and up the aisle, just as such things are managed generally.

Dear me! what a flutter there was, and what a rustling of

ladies' dresses, as the bride and her charming satellites approached the altar, and what stretching forth of slim and graceful necks—which didn't want to be *seen* to stretch forward either; and what a tremulousness and quivering of gentle hearts, to which the flutterings of silk dresses and the rustlings of crinolines were nothing!

As that amiable and accomplished young divine, the Rev. Theophilus Buttermouth, M.A. (cousin of Sir Walter, and who had come from his church at Pimlico on purpose to officiate upon the occasion)—as this delightful and popular young minister, I say, proceeded with the service, and as the solemn words fell softly-sounding from his lips, like the musical rippling of waters on a summer evening, the excitement became intense. A hushed but irrepressible murmur of sympathy mingled with the sound of waving trees outside, as an audible sob burst forth from the lips of Mrs. Evelyn.

"How *very* interesting!" whispered one lovely and sentimental young lady to another as lovely as she, when Sir Walter said, in a very firm and decided tone, "I will!" and when Grace said, in a very low and tremulous voice, that *she* would also.

"Most affecting, dear," replied the other lovely and sentimental young lady to the first; "and what a lovely dress she has, hasn't she?"

The flowing words of the Reverend Theophilus Buttermouth presently ceased. Certain of them retired with that sanctified divine to the vestry, amid a renewed rustling and humming of whispers and shuffling of footsteps. The party presently emerged from the porch; this time the blushing bride leaning upon the arm of the happy husband, who, despite his happiness, looked uncommonly as though he had just done something dreadful, and wanted to hide himself from the gaze of men.

As they walked down the avenue of trees amidst the cheering of the country folks and the renewed ringing of the bells, a dozen young ladies, attired alike, stepped out and scattered flowers from little baskets they held in their hands along the path and at the feet of the delighted Grace—that is, I mean, the delighted Lady Lee.

But the good old Rector—the noble old father of the bride—where, tell us, where is he?

The Rector was not far behind, beaming benignity upon the eager villagers, who stretched out their hands to receive a friendly grasp in passing. "God bless you, sir!" cried one, a sturdy farmer's man, whose hand was hard, whose heart was soft and tender. "And God bless them belonging to you!" cried a mother, her baby at her breast. And he returned their blessings and good wishes with a full heart as he passed them by.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A WEDDING BREAKFAST.

SUCH a wedding breakfast as the Rector had provided in honour of his daughter was never before beheld at the Rectory. Even Mrs. Phillips, who was present, admitted subsequently to Mrs. Barber, who was *not*, that it was a very stylish affair, and that, for her part, she had never so much enjoyed herself in all her days; and "young Wetherby, you know, dear, was so attentive to Flora—he scarcely ever left her side the whole of the day."

That famous speech of the Reverend Theophilus Buttermouth, in which he proposed the health and happiness of the bride and bridegroom, will ever be recollected by all who heard it with admiration. Refreshing was it beyond measure to behold the pretty pink, wax-dollish face of his, peering up as it were beyond those two clumps of jet-black whiskers, of which he was not unnaturally so vain; which he caressed so tenderly, and which the profane joked him about sometimes so terribly. He had never, he said, had such a pleasing task to perform as that which now devolved upon him; he felt that words were inadequate to express what he had uppermost in his thoughts; what possessed, as it were, an ethereal spirit—his very soul, in fact; what—hem! hem!—in short, what he desired to say in respect of that charming young lady, who, without any disparagement to the bright constellation of female beauty around him, he thought would be allowed upon the present occasion to occupy the most exalted position in their minds, their sympathies, their—in short, their—their (hear, hear!) their good wishes and their kindly sentiments. Need he say that he spoke of the blushing bride—of the beauteous Lady Lee? (Great cheering and general enthusiasm); at which the elegant divine smiled benignantly, and wiped his lips with a spotless cambric, and then went on—

"Ah! what a sight it was," he said, "to see a beauteous flower—a modest flower, that had bloomed in the desert, if he might make such a comparison without disparagement to the Rectory of Waverney (Hear, hear! from the Rector); to behold that flower nestling—nestling" (a vague consciousness that he was confusing his metaphors appeared to cause the orator a slight hesitation) "in the—hem!—the bosom of my esteemed relative, whose wife she has this day become. (Hear, hear.) He had only to say that he very heartily trusted this day might be the first milestone in that lady's life, and that, with the Divine blessing, she might proceed along that road for many, many stages in the Great

Family Coach, with a certain baronet's arms upon the door, and that the said baronet, his very much-esteemed relative, might be her fellow-traveller on the way; and, finally, that their mutual happiness might continually increase in the same ratio as the number of annual milestones they passed on their journey of life. Ladies and gentlemen, permit me, in conclusion, to propose the health, the prosperity, and felicity, both spiritual and temporal, of, I am proud to say, my new kinswoman, the bride."

Amidst immense cheering, the toast was drunk, and the Rev. Theophilus Buttermouth resumed his seat.

Mr. Evelyn arose, with evident emotion, to return thanks.

"It was with the deepest gratitude," he said, "that he rose to thank his brother—for such he might call the gentleman who had spoken last—for the kind and eloquent manner in which he had expressed his good wishes towards his daughter; and to thank the rest of his dear friends for the hearty and generous way in which they had responded to that toast. How could he express the gratitude he felt? ("Hear, hear," and "Dear old boy!" spontaneously from George.) He would trust to the indulgence of his friends, whom it delighted him from his very heart to see around him, to take his word simply, that he was very grateful to them for their kindness. He was very thankful also to the merciful God who had permitted him to live to see the day when *one*, at least, of his children" (here his voice became tremulous, and his eye filled with tears)—"one, at least, of his children was married to the husband of her choice; one to whose protection he could trust her; one who, as he sincerely believed, loved her as tenderly as he himself did. (Cheers from all sides, especially from Sir Walter Lee.) He again had to thank them; he—he—in short, he felt he could not say anything more to them just then, except that he was very glad to see all his dear friends gathered round him in the house where he had laboured for so many years, and where, he hoped, when the time came, he should die."

"God bless his dear old heart!" cried George, as his uncle sat down; "I wish I was half such a trump as he!"

And that young scamp was somehow so affected that he blew his nose, and didn't seem to care two straws whether Miss Phillips saw him wiping his eyes at the same time or not.

"Oh! I am so glad you like Mr. Evelyn!" cried Miss Flora, enraptured, and laying her pretty little hand, in her enthusiasm, upon Mr. Wetherby's arm.

"Glad?—the deuce! Why?" ejaculated that gentleman, opening his eyes in no small astonishment, but feeling the nerves in his arm quiver beneath that gentle touch. "This girl has certainly a pretty little hand, and very fine black eyes," he thought. And so

she had; and very well she knew it, too. This was exactly the reason she placed that hand upon his arm, and why she ogled him so captivately with her large lustrous black eyes, as she answered him, hanging down her head, as if in confusion.

"Because—oh! I don't know—because I think him such a dear man."

"Do you though, really, my dear Miss Phillips? Upon my word, I am very pleased to hear you say so," and he nudged his chair a little closer to her side.

He bethought himself, however, at this time of a duty he had to perform, and of which he thereupon rose to acquit himself, succeeding therein very fairly, albeit rather florid and metaphorical, viz., to propose the health and happiness, in the new matrimonial career which had now opened before him, of Sir Walter Lee.

That baronet, who showed himself extremely nervous upon this occasion, and who was certainly not so magniloquent an orator as his clerical cousin, spoke but a few words in reply. He excused himself for his brevity on the plea that he was a soldier, and that soldiers were men of action, and not of words. He thanked them very cordially for their good wishes for his happiness, nor could he refrain from adding that he thanked them also for the good wishes they had expressed for the welfare of the dear girl who had that day become his wife. (Prolonged cheering.) He had only to assure them that there was one hope, one desire uppermost in his heart, which was, that he might succeed, by his life-long endeavours, in making her happy, and never cause her to regret for one moment the very important step she had taken that day.

Sir Walter Lee ceased speaking amidst vociferous applause, which emanated especially from Mr. Wetherby, who, it must be allowed, strove manfully to be cheerful that day; but who could not help being troubled sometimes by the various suspicions he had entertained, or which extraneous circumstances had at one time and another forced upon him. He tried, however, very earnestly to forget all these, and had drunk somewhat freely of wine. He was not the first man who had sought forgetfulness in the wine-cup and not found it there.

It was an affecting scene, the parting of Lady Lee from her parents and her home. But the coach was waiting at the door, so there was not much time to spend in sentimentalism. Besides, we must all part some day from those we love, and who love us. One slinks away silently at one time, and then another by-and-bye, till, if we happen to have gone far on the high-road of life, we stand alone almost in the way, and look back sorrowfully to the points where we have dropped our comrades on the journey, and by which we are warned that the time draweth nigh, when we, in our turn,

had best say good-bye to those who will jog on a little further than we.

With my Lady Lee, however, there was this difference; that she was not going far away, but that she might expect to look on the dear faces again. 'Tis not like the parting when we know that the hand we press we shall press no more, and if we commune hereafter, 'twill be in the spirit, but not the flesh.

So the old shoe was thrown after them for luck, and if the exigencies of this story require, not otherwise, may they have it.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN OLD NEWSPAPER.

AFTER the bride and bridegroom had gone, I am not sure but what our remaining friends got merrier and more light-hearted than ever. Good Mrs. Evelyn was absent some little time, and her red eyes showed very plainly that she had been weeping; but now that her daughter was really *gone* and the parting was over, the tears soon gave place to sunny smiles. The Rector also became more cheerful, talkative, and jocose, as well as the rest of the company; but whether it was that the wine warmed them, or whether it was that the oppressive scene they had been expecting with dread was now over, who can say?

The afternoon passed over with more speech-making, the popping of more corks, and the flowing, consequently, of much more wine. In the evening there was music and singing. Miss Flora Phillips had a very fine soprano, and certainly played with fine execution upon the pianoforte, having had the advantage of Herr Von Sneiff's valuable instruction, when she was at boarding-school at Blackheath.

Mr. Wetherby sat by her side, turned over the leaves of her music, and listened with rapt attention to her performance—rather to the anger, I fear, of her elder sister, Clara, whose *forte* was not music, but painting, as she took the opportunity to let Mr. Wetherby know when she suffered herself, however, to be led by him to take her turn at the piano.

"Come, George, my lad, give us that song of yours," roared out the Rector, who was sitting in the balcony of the drawing-room, and smoking a cigar with the Reverend Theophilus Buttermouth, who was himself a very fair judge of the weed.

"Oh, *do* sing, Mr. Wetherby," added the gushing Flora, almost clapping her hands with enthusiasm, but recollecting herself sufficiently in time to prevent such an unseemly breach of propriety.

"Really—well, upon my word ——" began George.

"Pooh, pooh! don't tell me; you sing very well, my boy—so go

on a head," cried his uncle as jolly as ever was clergyman since the glorious Reformation.

"I tell you what, young man, you mustn't be shy," cries Mrs. Phillips, who is sitting very near the piano, you may be sure; and she playfully shakes the young barrister by the shoulder; and turning affectionately to her younger daughter, she adds: "Flora will play it for you—won't you, my dear?"

"I will if I can;—what do you sing, Mr. Wetherby?" the smiling Flora returns, glancing down very slyly upon the carpet.

"Sing that song about the man with the flag, George;—you know what I mean," adds Mrs. Evelyn, good-naturedly.

"The Standard-Bearer, do you mean?"

"Oh, *do* sing the Standard-Bearer, Mr. George!" exclaims Miss Flora, striking up the symphony of that famous ballad.

So there being no help for it, and Mr. Wetherby knowing that he had a very passable voice, plunged boldly into it; and how tenderly he ogled the pretty Flora when he came to the words, "the lady that I love, I will not name!" And when that song was ended, Mr. Wetherby would have it that Miss Flora should sing a song in her turn, which was, however, compromised by Mrs. Phillips (who was unwilling that her elder daughter should be so entirely put into the shade), by a duet between her two girls.

Mr. Barber sang a good jolly song of the old school, in which the chorus was by far the longest part of it; and in which the whole of the company, one and all, joined vociferously.

The guests were at last compelled to depart, and the neat little phaeton, which Mrs. Phillips was rather fond of pompously styling "our carriage," being at the door, Mr. George Wetherby escorted the young ladies thereto.

"By George, I like that little Phillips uncommonly!" muttered the gentleman to himself, as he returned to his friends. Whereupon Mr. Wetherby became very silent for the remainder of the evening, and did not get to sleep very early, through thinking about this Flora, and what a nice girl she was; and thinking also about Grace, and of the inscrutable destiny before her, he had insensibly set himself ruminating about poor Emma;—she who, had a happier fate permitted, might have been Mrs. Wetherby, and presiding over his lonely hearth at the Temple—

"No—deuce take it, I wouldn't have stayed in that mouldy old Temple if—if—ah—h—h—h—!"

And Mr. Wetherby, who had got very sentimental in his repose, gave such a prodigious sigh that it sounded almost like a groan; turned himself upon his other side, and began thinking of pretty Miss Flora until he fell asleep. To say in a few words what might be intended over a dozen chapters, Mr. Wetherby was not a little

smitten with this young lady. He returned to London the day following the wedding, but even the unromantic solitude of the Temple seemed haunted, to him, by the bright eyes of Flora. Indeed, Mr. Wetherby seemed by no means loth to visit the old Rectory now, and was continually running down to Waverney to pay his aunt and uncle a day or two's visit; and they, for their part, were glad enough to see him, without caring too much about the cause of his excursions; for the place was very lonely to them now Grace was away on her marriage tour.

It was during one of these occasional visits to the Rectory, and two or three months after Grace had left her home, that the following incidents happened to George Wetherby. He had gone to bed one night early, early at least for him—fatigued by his journey, and excited by a brief interview, which had somehow come to pass, between himself and the pretty Flora. Owing to a repetition of such a dream as the above recorded, and the restlessness consequent thereupon, he awoke in the morning with a splitting head-ache.

“Somehow, I don't feel quite right this morning. I don't know how it is,—my head aches terribly! that devilish toddy I took last night doesn't seem to agree with me at all.”

He gaped again, looked at the window, and saw the sun was shining brightly. He found he could sleep no more, so he thought he might as well get up and try what a draught of clear cold water would do towards refreshing him. Having scrupulously performed all the operations of his toilet, Mr. Wetherby looked at his watch and saw it was only six o'clock.

“They don't breakfast till seven,” think's he.

Thus, having an hour to get over meanwhile, he threw open the window, which let in a gush of beautiful fresh air, redolent with new mown hay; draws up a chair to the said window, and thinks he may as well make the time additionally pleasant with a cigar. In the flat candlestick which the servant had left in his bedroom the night before was a small piece of candle and only one lucifer match.

In the corner of the bedroom was an oblong box, the lid of which was open, and in which the gentleman espied an old *Times* newspaper. Whereupon, without hesitation, he tore off a scrap from the advertisement sheet, lighted the same, and immediately puffed his cigar into a cheery blaze.

As he was about to replace the remnant of the newspaper in the box, he perceived a card upon the latter, upon which were written the words “Miss Smith,” which he recollected immediately to be the name assumed by his ill-fated cousin, Emma Evelyn. A feeling of sadness stole over the young man's heart. He thought he would like to peruse that old copy of the *Times*, which had, per-

haps, once been held in her hand, which her eyes had, perhaps, once read. He took the old paper to the window very tenderly, and sat down again in the chair.

And here it may be remarked that George had never received from his uncle an entire account of Emma's death, or, at least, of all its details. Mr. Evelyn was always so overcome when he alluded to it, that he avoided the subject as much as possible.

Almost the first words the young lawyer's eye fell upon arrested his attention, and caused him to take the cigar suddenly from his lips, with a sharp exclamation, and to read on for a few moments with evident excitement.

"Great Heaven!" he ejaculated, "what is this? Has anyone besides myself seen this; or am I, driven by a mysterious fatality, the one to have found a clue which may, perhaps, lead to the discovery of the secret I have vowed to punish if I can unfold?"

Then he took up the paper again which he had thrown down a minute before, and eagerly read the advertisement—for such it was—which had wrought such an effect upon him. It was, in fact, one of those curious advertisements which appear in the second column of the *Times*. Unfortunately a portion of it had been torn away with that very piece which George had used a few minutes only previously to light his cigar with. That which remained was simply to the effect that a certain mysterious "Emma was besought immediately to return to, or communicate with, her distracted W——;" the remaining initial being destroyed.

Now, the question that passed through Wetherby's mind, with the rapidity of lightning, and almost with the violence, was this: *Could this person addressed as "Emma" be his unhappy cousin?* If so, there could be little doubt that the advertiser—whoever he might be—who adopted the initials of "W.," and some other letter or letters, of which he was at present ignorant, was the girl's betrayer, who herein entreated her, most likely, to return to him after she had left him.

On the one hand, now, the bare fact that an advertisement should be addressed to a person named Emma showed nothing at all to prove that said Emma was identical with Emma Evelyn. Emma was not an uncommon name. George knew many persons of that name—his dear housekeeper rejoiced in it, as he was aware. On the other hand, however, was the fact—a most noticeable one—that round the advertisement was a line of black-lead pencilling, as though to mark it out for distinction. Again, here was the newspaper containing it on the box which had belonged to her, to whom the hypotheses supposed the advertisement to be addressed. George Wetherby could not doubt that this Emma was his unfortunate cousin.

"Yet it is certainly very strange," so he communed with himself, "that this has never been mentioned to me before; unless, indeed, it may have escaped the observation of my uncle, and of those who have examined this chest. It is likely enough—nay, it is highly probable—that they might not even think to look at such an uninviting article as the advertisement sheet of the *Times*. By Jove, I should not, under different circumstances than the present. It is by the merest accident that I have come across it now. And—yes, of course it may turn out after all—it is quite possible that this may have been merely an advertisement put in the paper by my poor uncle himself."

This latter supposition was, however, as quickly relinquished as formed: firstly, because the date of the newspaper was a considerable time after the poor girl had left her home; and, secondly and conclusively, because Mr. Evelyn's name did not begin with a "W." And here George began to cudgel his brains to guess whom this "W." could be. Surmising was, however, of course out of the question; Watson, Wilson, Watkins—his own name, Wetherby—all would answer so far. Besides, the "W." might refer to a Christian name as well as a surname. Were there any other initials that he had destroyed, or not? That was the question. How savage with himself was he that he had torn up that newspaper!

"This doesn't matter very much," he muttered, between his teeth; "I know the date, and I can easily ascertain the rest by reference to the file of the *Times*; and that I will do this very day."

He glanced impatiently at his watch again, for he longed to see his uncle. It wanted now a quarter of an hour to seven o'clock, when, looking out of the window, how great was his delight to behold the worthy Rector walking in the garden. Not long was it ere Wetherby, *Times* in hand, was down in the garden too.

"Well, my dear George, have you come to seek an appetite for your breakfast in the fresh morning air?" said the Rector, shaking the young fellow warmly by the hand.

"I have come, sir, to have some talk with you; before which, I fear, I am likely to have little appetite for anything."

"So serious as that? For goodness' sake, don't lose your liking for honest food!"

"I trust what I have to say may not cause you to lose yours."

"Let us walk into this summer-house, then, my dear boy," the Rector replied, now regarding the anxious face of his companion apprehensively.

"We have a quarter of an hour before breakfast-time, I think?"

"Never mind the breakfast-time, my dear George—at least, so far as *I* am concerned; if you want to talk to me, I am quite at your service. I hope, however, you have no ill news?"

They entered the summer-house and sat down. Wetherby placed the old newspaper upon the little wooden table, and pointing out the circumscribed advertisement with his finger, said—

"Do you know anything of this?"

"No, George! I have never seen this before," he said. And then he added—"Tell me where you found this newspaper."

Wetherby then explained to him, as briefly as possible, how he had discovered the paper in the box which was standing in his bedroom.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MR. WETHERBY GOES "EASTWARD, OH!"

"I RECOLLECT observing an old newspaper amongst the other things when the poor girl's box was brought home," the Rector said, presently.

"You think, then, with me, that the person here addressed and *she* are one and the same?" George Wetherby said, after a pause.

The old clergyman looked hard at the young man, as he, with a smile, replied—

"My dear boy, what else is it possible to think? Whose hand but *hers* can have thus marked out this advertisement from the rest, as though——"

"As though," interrupted George, quickly, "she, having seen it, had kept it by her for future meditation."

"Exactly so!"

"Perhaps all this was planned by the irrevocable hand of fate," pursued Wetherby, moodily, "that her guilty betrayer may be punished at last!"

"The ways of Providence are inscrutable, George! It may be so. It is strange I have never seen this, though I believed I had searched the contents of that box, and examined all the papers the poor thing had left well."

"I don't know about the strangeness of *that*. What could you possibly have expected to find, in regard to Emma, in the stray advertisement sheet of an old *Times*?"

"Truly, George—truly!" returned Mr. Evelyn, with a sigh. "What could I have expected, indeed!"

"I thought," said George, with hesitation, "perhaps *you* had been the advertiser."

"I? No; indeed it was not I!"

"But, on the other hand——"

"Ah! what, my dear boy!" cried the Rector, eagerly.

"Neither of your initials is a 'W.,'" returned Wetherby, quietly.

Mr. Evelyn started, and his face clouded, and he drew his hand across his brow.

"Who *can* the villain have been?" he muttered, in so low a voice that even his companion could scarcely hear him.

"Who, indeed!" returned George, moodily; "but *that* is a question which, if need be, I will devote my life to solve!"

"In what way, George?"

"I will *think* in what way, and I believe, sir, I shall succeed."

"Should you even succeed, what would be the utility?"

The eyes of George Wetherby sparkled with excitement, as he replied—

"I will avenge the honour of my family!—have I not vowed to do so? If I can discover the miscreant who has entered this peaceful home, bringing unhappiness to all, and misery and death to her who, until he came, deserved it least, I will avenge her wrong—by Heaven I will!"

The Rector placed his hand gently on the speaker's arm.

"George Wetherby," he said, "have I not reminded you that vengeance belongs to Him by whom you swear so impiously?"

"Would you have the guilty to go unpunished?"

"The guilty will *not* go unpunished."

Wetherby made no answer, but a gesture of impatience escaped him unawares, as he glanced gloomily upon the ground. He requested Mr. Evelyn to recount to him all the particulars he could think of regarding Emma's death, and also of her manner of living whilst she was dwelling at Mile-end. Eagerly did he listen to the account, which he now heard for the first time, of the Rector's adventure with Mr. William Sparks, the vendor of clothes-lines; and when Mr. Evelyn spoke of the miniature portrait which that loquacious person had stated Miss Smith (*alias* Evelyn) was sometimes in the habit of wearing, he almost startled his informant by the sudden violence with which he sprang to his feet.

"Will you give me the address of this person?" he cried, taking out his memorandum-book and writing it down. "Thank you, I purpose making certain inquiries of him, and will acquaint you with the result."

They now returned together to the house. As they were about to enter, Mr. Evelyn laid his hand upon the young man's shoulder, saying—

"Do not mention what we have been discussing, George, before my wife. Poor thing, it would only disturb and worry her."

During breakfast Wetherby and his uncle appeared as cheerful as possible, and the former, who had arranged to remain at the Rectory for a few days, brought it out casually that he thought he should have to return to town that day for a few hours to transact a little business.

"Mrs. Evelyn was somewhat surprised at this, but as her favourite nephew had stated it was *business* which called him away, she raised no objection to his going.

Soon after the meal was over, George got up to leave.

"I will go with you to the station, George," Mr. Evelyn said.

"One thing more I will take a memorandum of," said Wetherby just before starting.

"And that is——"

"Merely the date of the *Times*, which is—let me see."

"January 3rd, 1861."

Having given his temporary address to Mrs. Evelyn, George proceeded in the company of his uncle to Waverney Junction Railway Station.

When the young lawyer was seated in the train, and whilst the departure-bell was ringing, the Rector put his head in at the carriage window, and said—

"Remember, my dear boy, what I have cautioned you of. Think over it all, and do nothing rashly, I implore you."

Ere a reply could be given, the engine began puffing and the train rolled away, leaving the speaker standing on the platform, gazing wistfully after it.

"*Nous verons ce que nous verons*," the young barrister muttered as he sank back into the soft cushions of his seat.

Arrived at the Terminus at London, Wetherby bent his course, citywards, traversing London-bridge, and turning up Leadenhall-street.

In this quarter of the town there is, as all city men are aware, a very good reading-room, where merchants and brokers meet promiscuously with their clerks to peruse the newspapers. Into this news-room Mr. Wetherby entered.

Apart from the busy throng of readers, Mr. Wetherby pored over the file of newspapers, earnestly seeking that one which was dated January 3rd. A brief search apparently enabled him to find what he wanted, for presently he quitted the place. His face was overcast with a shade of deep thought, if not of gloom.

"I know not hardly what to make of it," he murmured; "but I have a strange presentiment that weighs heavily—very heavily—upon my heart. These initials—yes, by Heaven, there are many little things which I have never comprehended which now appear

to me but so many links in one continued chain of circumstantial evidence. Curious that these initials should be — Poor Emma, and now, indeed, poor Grace ! I pray Heaven my foreboding may prove wrong !”

He groaned as the last words escaped quite audibly from his lips. Waiting a little while at the corner of the street, he presently entered an omnibus which was going eastwards, and which, after about twenty minutes' ride, put him down near to the same spot where Mr. Evelyn had alighted on a former occasion.

He had some trouble in finding the “ Little Tea Chest,” before which he at length halted to consult his memorandum-book.

“ This is the place, I suppose ; and a devilish queer sort of a place it is,” he said, looking askance up the dirty court by the side of the house, and in which various articles of under-clothing were drying on lines stretched across ; and amidst which, like dirty birds among lilies, children were flitting about at play. Not without feelings akin to disgust did he enter the shop.

Mr. Jones was behind the counter, clad in his white apron, and with his thick bull-dog face looking as greasy, and his large bleary eyes as fishy as usual.

“ Sir,” said he, smiling insinuatingly, as he leant over the counter, “ what shall I have the pleasure to get for you ?”

“ Nothing at all, thank you,” returned George, hastily. “ Is there a person of the name of Sparks residing here ?” he added.

Mr. Obadiah Jones stared very hard at his visitor, and having at last completed his survey, he very slowly replied—

“ Yes, there is.”

“ I wish to see him, if he is at home,” returned George ; at which Mr. Jones, for the space of something less than two minutes, seemed lost in an apathy of indecision, when suddenly waking up, as it were, and wiping his hands upon his apron, said—

“ Oh ! certainly, sir—certainly,” he very briskly replied.—“ My dear !”

The latter apostrophe was addressed to some one in the little parlour behind the glass-door with the green gauze blind.

“ Well, what is it now ?” returned a female voice ; and a female face appeared, first peering over the green blind, and then in the shop by her husband's side. For it was Mrs. Jones to whom that female face belonged, who saluted Mr. Wetherby with a polite curtsey when she saw him.

“ The gentleman wants to know if Mr. Sparks is in,” observed Mr. Jones, partly in explanation, and partly to elicit a reply.

“ I'll soon see, sir,” said Mrs. Jones, affably, going, by means of a side-door, to a flight of stairs.

Standing at the foot of these stairs, she called Mr. Sparks by name three or four times.

No response was, however, vouchsafed to these repeated summonses, and Mrs. Jones returned into the shop with the confident assurance that Mr. Sparks *wasn't* at home.

"Wait a moment, sir," she added, observing Mr. Wetherby, with evident disappointment, was about to turn away; "his boy, sir, is a-playin' in the court. I'll call him, and find out, sir, if you please."

Upon which Mrs. Jones repaired to another side-door, and which ran by the side of the house; and, after looking about her for a few seconds, she called out to someone, in the same harsh key as before—

"Here, Bob, you come here! you're wanted. Where's yer father gone to—do yer know?"

The small youth, with gaping mouth and staring eyes, and clad in a lofty fur cap and ragged green jacket with brass buttons, was no other than the Master Bob Sparks whose acquaintance the reader, in company with Mr. Evelyn, has already had the advantage of making.

In reply to the repeated question as to where his father was (which he at first met by a counter question as to who wanted him), Bob at length stated that he thought his father was "on the waste."

"He means the open ground in the road, sir," Mrs. Jones explained, "where he is selling his clothes-lines, sir."

Mr. Wetherby prevailed upon Bob, by the promise of a gratuity, to lead him thither; and bidding the greasy Mr. Jones and his masculine wife "Good-day!" he ordered his youthful guide to lead the way. Five minutes' brisk walking brought them to Mr. Sparks himself.

"Here he is, sir," said the boy, pointing with one hand, and intimating his immediate expectation of the promised reward by significantly holding out the other, receiving which, he scampered off in the twinkling of an eye.

"Is your name Sparks, my friend, may I venture to inquire?" said Wetherby, approaching the strange little man.

"Yes, sir, it is," the man replied.

"Pray, Mr. Sparks, do you remember a young lady who died in the house you live at, and whose name was Smith?"

The man looked up sharply, and answered—

"I knew one who went by the *name* of Smith, but whose real name——"

"Was Evelyn. Precisely so. I perceive you know the lady to whom I refer."

"Well, sir, I suppose I do; and what then?"

"I am a friend of hers."

"Oh! are you?" returned Sparks, quickly, and with a beaming smile. "Then anything I can do for you, sir, I will. Poor creature! the world was ag'in her, sir."

"It was indeed," replied Wetherby, with a sigh. "But I want to have a little quiet talk with you, Mr. Sparks. Can you spare me half-an-hour? You shall be remunerated for your trouble and loss of time."

"Thank you, sir, certainly," replied the man; and his rope was quickly wound upon his arm.

At Wetherby's request, he led the way to a quiet public-house, and entered the parlour, where they found themselves alone.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GEORGE WETHERBY MAKES AN ALLY.

"You no doubt recollect a gentleman who paid you a visit one night when the poor girl was lying dead, and——"

"Her father, you mean, sir?" Mr. Sparks interrupted quickly, seating himself at the table in the public parlour opposite Mr. Wetherby.

"Exactly so;—I had forgotten you were acquainted with——"

"Oh, sir, the gentleman was candid enough, and told me all that," interrupted the clothes-line seller, even before the sentence was complete.

"Very true; he informed me that he did so;—but help yourself to some ale."

"Thank you, sir," replied Mr. Will Sparks; "here's wishing you respects, sir."

Mr. Wetherby nodded his thanks, and then proceeded to business.

"I believe, Mr. Sparks, you are acquainted with the little we know of Miss Evelyn's history, prior to her taking up her residence in the house in which she died?"

"Yes, sir, I fancy I know about all that anybody knows of the poor young woman—except the blackguard himself—bad luck to him!"

Despite his assumed calmness, George Wetherby started at the man's words, and at the manner in which he uttered them. Quickly recovering himself, however, he said, "You speak strongly, my friend."

"It's because I feel strongly, then," growled Will, savagely.

"From what my uncle—that is, from what Mr. Evelyn, tells

me, I think you would be willing to assist me in discovering that man?"

"That I would, and no mistake about it, sir, if I only knew how," returned Sparks, with vehemence, and causing the glasses upon the table to rattle with the violence of the blow with which he struck it. "Why look you here, sir," he added, stretching out his hand, and in a voice heightened by excitement. "That young lady, God bless her, poor thing! was a sister almost to my poor old woman when she were laid up in her last sickness, and I shall never forget her as long as my name's Will Sparks, and *that* won't change just this side o' Christmas!"

George Wetherby was almost paralysed with wonder at this unexpected ebullition of feeling on the part of the grateful fellow. He thought to himself this was just the sort of man to help him to elucidate those mysteries of which henceforth he felt he should scarcely be able to sleep for thinking and endeavouring to find out plans whereby he might succeed to fathom them.

"Look ye here, sir," the man cried again, "look at this here dawg. Here, Charley, you beggar, stand out with yer! Now look ye here, sir; that dawg doesn't look particularly gentle, does he? he doesn't look an angel, does he, now?"

Charley, who at the first summons had sprung into the middle of the room, earnestly watching each expression of his master's face with a pair of bloodshot eyes, and showing his fierce teeth that grinned not at all angelically,—gave a low whine, and certainly did not look very gentle.

"Well, sir," added Will, "that dawg was as fond of her as he were of his meat."

"Good Heaven!" thought George, "how curious it is to think that I and yonder miserable-looking cur should have so pure a sentiment as love in common to us both!"

A pause ensuing, he said aloud—

"You intimated to Mr. Evelyn that his daughter was in the habit of wearing a certain brooch which contained the miniature portrait of a gentleman's face."

"That is true, sir; I did."

"Have you ever seen that portrait since?"

"Maybe I have."

"Ah, indeed!—tell me when? Where did you see it?"

"And maybe I havn't," added Will, rocking himself to and fro.

"My good fellow, you must know whether you have seen it again or not."

"Leastways, you see, sir, I don't want to get into trouble by saying anything that anybody can lay hold of and make me prove."

"But, my good man," interposed George a little impatiently, "the question is a very simple one: have you seen this brooch or have you not? As for your getting yourself into a scrape, I confess I don't know what you mean; but you may depend upon this—that what you tell me I shall consider as spoken in strict confidence."

The next moment, however, the matter seemed to strike him in a new light, and seizing Wetherby's hand in a vice-like grip, "Well, here goes, at all events!" he exclaimed; "dash my buttons if I don't make a clean breast of it to you, anyhow. You were *her* friend, so I'm dashed if I don't trust you!"

Sparks wiped his lips with a red rag which he pulled out of his pocket, and justified himself further with another vigorous draught of beer.

"Look'ee here," he said, in a low confidential tone, "between you and me, sir, as gentlemen, I have seen this here; leastways," he added, as a saving clause, "if it weren't the same, it were most uncommonly like it, that's all."

An exclamation, which he could not suppress, burst from the lips of George Wetherby.

"When—where did you see it? Was it long ago?"

"Wo-o-ho!" interrupted the other. "Supposing, now, in the first place, that this here, which, by way of argument, I say were not uncommon different from that there, but which I don't exactly say were that there; supposing, I say, it were the same, and no other——"

George Wetherby threw down a sovereign on the table.

"Speak plainly, my man," said he, "and this shall be an earnest of what I am willing to pay for any information upon the subject you are able to give."

"No, dash my buttons, it isn't this I want!" cried Sparks, bringing down his fist upon the table with a thump that made the golden coin spin high in the air; "what I tell you, sir, I tell you freely, and without bein' paid for it, for her sake; and I say, supposing the one I saw last was the one I saw fust, and which I told her father on—I say, then, I saw it one evening in the house where I live in, and not more nor about a month ago, or my name isn't Will Sparks!"

Mr. Wetherby then pointed to the sovereign, and said, "Put this in your pocket, my friend, or some one else will take it for you; and now give me some further particulars about this brooch. You say you saw it about a month ago, and in the house at which you reside? I must inform you that I am very anxious to see this trinket. When you mentioned the circumstance of Miss Evelyn wearing such an one to her father, he made in-

quiries of the people in this house—as, perhaps, you may be aware—and they stated to him that they knew nothing whatever about it.”

Mr. Sparks edged in a little nearer to his companion, and with a very confidential wink of the eye, said, “You’ve just come from the place in which I hang out, haven’t you?”

“Certainly. It was your son, I believe, who brought me here.”

“To be sure it was,” returned Will. “Well, and who, now, was it that sent him with you here? Come; who was it, now? tell me that?”

“The mistress of the house, I suppose,” rejoined George.

Sparks brought his lips close to the young man’s ear.

“Well, then, I tell you; where I saw that brooch was on her bosom; that’s where it was, and now here else!”

“And how did she get it in her possession?” he ejaculated, at length.

Will Sparks brushed his fur cap tenderly with his coat sleeve, and shrugged his shoulders.

“I expect she must have appropriated it,” he returned, coolly.

“You mean, you think she must have stolen it?”

“Oh dear no; bless her sanctimonious heart, she wouldn’t do that,” returned the vendor of clothes-lines, grinning. “Don’t you know what a very religious sort of a dodger she is? Very religious, bless her dear heart! But don’t you see, sir, that perhaps when the poor young woman died, she—he! he! he!—she might have taken care of it for her? Dead folks can’t take care of their own things, can they?”

“By no means,” rejoined George, amused at the fellow’s slyness, “unless, indeed, they hold it *in mortuâ manu* or *mortmain*. But listen to me, my friend; I will go back with you, and we’ll see if we can’t manage to bring these little circumstances to the recollection of the excellent lady in question. Perhaps she may then be persuaded to part with the trinket, as she is so good—especially when we remind her that it doesn’t belong to her.”

“Ah, but, sir, supposing she won’t remember anything about it; or supposing she will remember that—let us say—that poor Miss Evelyn gave it her, or anything else she pleases? Lord bless your innocence, sir, she have got an uncommon sort of a memory when she likes; and as for the article, rent, lor’, if I wern’t to keep a sharp look-out, she’d remember there were six weeks due in every month, she would.”

George Wetherby reflected deeply. There was a good deal of truth in what the man said, and no doubt it would be very much

better if the thing could be done quietly. But that it *should* be done, and that he would have the brooch with the miniature portrait in his possession, by one means or another, he was fully determined.

"Do you think you could manage to get this brooch, now, yourself?" he demanded at length.

"Perhaps I might," said he; "leastways, sir, I'll think it over, how it is to be done."

"Do so, my friend, and let me know the progress of plans. If you succeed, the sovereign I have given you shall be increased to five. I perceive you are a clever, sharp sort of a fellow, so I need not warn you to be careful how you set about the job. In fact, Mr. Sparks, I intend to leave this entirely to your own skill."

"Trust me, sir, *I'm* up to snuff," returned Mr. Sparks, evidently much flattered by the other's good opinion.

"Here is my card," added Mr. Wetherby. "Call round upon me this day week, and let me know what you have done. In the meantime, if you should have succeeded in your object, come to me at once. Do you mark what I say?"

"To be sure, sir, to be sure. I will think it over to-night, and if I can hit upon any plan of settling the little affair quietly, I won't lose a jiffy about it."

"Very well, my friend. To-day is Friday; I shall expect you therefore at my chambers on Friday next, at, say, seven o'clock in the evening. I shall not detain you any longer this afternoon."

Mr. Wetherby arose from his seat, paid the reckoning, and wished his companion and ally good-day. Mr. Will Sparks remained to finish the contents of the pewter-pot, and then took his departure also.

"Come along, Charley, my lad," cried he, chuckling to his dog, as these two individuals emerged into the street; "this won't be a bad day's work for us, I fancy, will it, my boy? Especially if we can pay off a debt of kindness to one as was kind to us at the same time—eh, Charley?"

Circumstances had so chanced that Mr. George Wetherby had come to look upon himself as called by Destiny to unravel the *first* of these mysteries; and the reader is aware he was in possession of more than one clue tending to that end. It is possible that in his efforts to unravel the first, he may contribute materially in the elucidation of the others. How far this is the fact is, however, the province of the remaining chapters which I intend to write to disclose. Upon leaving the public-house, in the parlour of which Mr. Wetherby had had his interview with Will Sparks, he got into a cab, in which he was driven direct to the London-bridge Railway-station, where he took the evening mail train to Waverney. When he reached the Rectory, he found his aunt and uncle sitting in the

parlour, cozily playing a game of draughts. The Rector's face, however, wore an absent and distracted expression, that betokened how little his mind was occupied by the game.

"You perceive, my dear aunt, I am true to my promise," laughed George, assuming a jaunty air.

"And I am very glad you are, my dear," returned Mrs. Evelyn; "for what with Grace being away, and what with your uncle being so grumpy and lost that he don't know the colour of his own men from mine—really, my dear, I could almost cry my eyes out."

"There's a grateful woman you are, upon my word," returned the Rector, faintly smiling; "when I have actually left a sermon that ought to be finished to-night on purpose that I might play draughts with you, and keep you company. A 'grumpy' man wouldn't do that, would he, George?" he added, turning to his nephew with a hard, sharp look.

"Oh—ah, I daresay," answered the lady, good-humouredly, as she bustled out of the room to order tea for Mr. Wetherby, of which she declared he must be greatly in need, after his journey.

As soon as the two gentlemen were alone, the Rector demanded if his nephew had succeeded in obtaining any further clue.

"A slight one," replied Wetherby.

The Rector got up and closed the door carefully.

"After you had gone this morning," said he, "I turned over the contents of poor Emma's box upstairs, to see if I could find anything further to lead to the identification of him for whom we seek. Among a few papers which were of no importance I found this."

And Mr. Evelyn threw upon the table an old pawnbroker's duplicate. Wetherby almost seized it, and examined it with breathless attention. It was dated November 19th, 1861, and was issued from a certain Mr. Reid's, Tottenham-court-road, upon an opal ring pledged there in the name of a person, designated as William Langton.

George Wetherby uttered an exclamation that might have been of relief or disappointment, and paced the room, violently agitated.

"Then I was on the wrong scent," he muttered, in so low a tone that even his uncle could not catch the exact meaning of the words. "Well, well, pray Heaven, for the sake of all of us, that my dreadful apprehensions may not prove true."

"Do you know anybody of this name, George?" demanded Mr. Evelyn at last, after regarding his nephew's agitation some time in silence and wonder.

Recalled to himself, Wetherby reperused the little ticket and then handed it back to the Rector.

"No," he answered, composedly; "I know no such name as William Langton, certainly; but it corresponds with the initials of the advertisement exactly, as I discovered this afternoon after a slight search."

It was now the Rector's turn to be agitated.

"Who—who can this Langton be?" he ejaculated. "I have never heard of such a person or such a name before! William Langton! William Langton!"

"My uncle," rejoined Wetherby, "this is a question I will ere long solve; until to-night I thought I had a clue; but this discovery you have made has thrown me off the trail. But only for a little while—a very little while. Soon *another* clue will be obtained. I have laid the train this very day, and, doubtless, soon my object will be gained; and then—and *then*——"

He turned away, and the sentence died unfinished upon his tongue, for his voice sounded so hollow, even to himself, it almost frightened him.

Mr. Evelyn was about to say something more, but just then his wife came into the room, and so the subject of conversation changed, and nothing more was spoken of their thoughts and apprehensions that night.

The next morning Mrs. Evelyn received a letter from Grace, which was full of nothing but gushing descriptions of the various sights of her travels, the wonders and delights of which she was now beginning to weary. She wrote from Paris, having "done" the Rhine, Rome, and so forth, and was now on her return with "Dear Walter" homewards, and from the enraptured way in which she spoke of the dear old Rectory, no doubt she was rather longing to get back again. Then came a gushing declaration of her present perfect happiness; many tender allusions to the said "dear Walter" being scattered here and there, amidst an overwhelming amount of gratitude and love for the care and increasing tenderness of that gentleman, whose whole object in life, so she said, was to increase the writer's happiness.

George Wetherby found an opportunity, in the course of the morning, to resume the conversation with the Rector, and related to him the efforts he had been making for the recovery of the miniature portrait, with the existence of which he (Mr. Evelyn) had acquainted him; recounting also as minutely as possible the conversation he had had with Will Sparks and the arrangements he had made with him for the following week.

Mr. Evelyn, who, having acquitted himself of what he deemed his duty, in pointing out to his nephew that vengeance did not belong to poor erring mortals like ourselves, and in exhorting him, consequently, not to do anything rash in the prosecution of the pur-

pose which Wetherby had so solemnly vowed to fulfil, was, despite himself, interested in no little degree in the result of the young man's efforts to discover the seducer of his child.

He listened with eager attention to Wetherby's narration, and actually expressed his approval of the course the latter had adopted; much, however, to his own mortification and annoyance afterwards, when he reflected that he had thereby indirectly sanctioned the seeking of that vengeance which he had in his exhortations so much condemned.

He said he thought it would have been extremely imprudent to have demanded the brooch of Mrs. Jones point-blank, as that would have served to have put her at once upon her guard, and she would, no doubt, have denied all knowledge of it whatever. He also expressed his opinion that nothing could have been arranged better than to leave the affair entirely in the hands of the sharp-witted clothes-line-seller, of whose sagacity and shrewdness he appeared to entertain a very high opinion.

George stated his intention of again returning to town next morning, for the purpose of redeeming the pledged ring, and of trying to ascertain if he could glean aught as to the person who pawned it; and in the meantime, while Mrs. Evelyn was employed otherwise and out of the way, he and the Rector together turned over all the papers which were in his cousin's box, and which consisted for the most part of penny periodicals. Nothing further, however, could be discovered likely to afford the slightest clue to the state of the unfortunate girl's life or condition during the two years she had been away from home.

Soon after breakfast next day he sped away. Arrived at the terminus, he bent his course, not eastward this time, but in the opposite direction, to Tottenham-court-road. There was no great difficulty in finding out the place which was, this time his destination. It was in a little bye-street jutting off to the right; but the three golden balls hanging out from the front of it could be seen from the main thoroughfare itself. Wetherby stated to the youth in the shop the object with which he had come, and, producing the duplicate, asked if the ring was still to be obtained. The shopman made a search in his books, and then informed him that the ring was all right, and that upon his paying up the interest and redeeming it, he could have it. To this Wetherby eagerly assented, and the ring, which was a curious opal set in gold, was handed over to him. It was evidently of considerable value, as it had originally been pledged for five guineas.

"Have you any recollection of the person who brought this here?" George demanded, in an off-hand way.

The shopman shook his head and smiled.

"Of course it is not likely you would remember," interrupted George, "yet I thought it was just possible——"

"Wait one moment, sir; I will inquire of the other young man if *he* knows anything about it. He may."

The "other young man" being appealed to, at first declared he did *not* know anything about it; but afterwards, upon examining the ring more minutely, he seemed to recal something of the circumstances to his mind.

"Hum! I fancy I *do* remember the young person who came to pay the interest upon it. She was a young lady, about eighteen or twenty, I should say, and very pretty. I remember *that* especially."

"Was she dark or fair complexioned?"

"Dark, sir; decidedly dark, with deep, brown waving hair; and yes—I think she was dressed in a dark merino dress."

"Can you recollect anything else about her? The fact is, I am much interested in the identification of this young person with a lady to whom I was once very intimately known."

"Well, no, sir, I don't think I can recal anything more about her just at present. She wasn't in the shop many minutes."

Finding he could gain no further information, George Wetherby thanked the shopmen for the trouble they had taken, and left the place.

"Was that girl poor Emma or not?" he mentally asked himself as he turned into the street. "The description tallies exactly, and I feel but little doubt. Heavens! to think that she, so young, so fair, and once so innocent, should have come to this! What a fall was hers! How happy she might have been otherwise—and—and how happy *I* might have been also! A curious piece of jewellery, upon my word," he said, aloud, as he held the ring up to the light, and then tried it upon his finger. "I'll be hanged if I know whether it is meant for a lady's ring or a gentleman's;—it seems almost too large for the one, and too small for the other. Mark my words, George Wetherby, my friend, this ring will lead to something yet," said he to himself. "I doubt much whether it ever belonged to Emma before she left her home, and, if not, *someone* has probably given it her. Then the question is—who can that someone be?"

Pondering upon this question, George Wetherby directed his steps towards his chambers in the Temple. Arrived at Fig-tree-court, he despatched a note to Waverney, informing his uncle of the result of his journey to Tottenham-court-road; and stating that he should be again at the Rectory in a few days, as soon as ever he had heard from Mr. Will Sparks. He then marked the envelope "private," and dropped it into the post. After which there was nothing more to be done till Sparks had communicated with him the result of his efforts to procure the miniature brooch.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WILL SPARKS MEETS A FRIEND.

WILL SPARKS, much elated with the sight and feeling of the sovereign which had been presented to him by the young lawyer, began to revolve in his mind plans and schemes, some of them of the very wildest, for the obtaining possession of Miss Evelyn's brooch. His inventive powers were the more stimulated in this direction by the thought that when the jewel was handed over to George Wetherby, he, Will Sparks, would be entitled, by promise, to the remainder of the five pounds.

The last scheme, however, that occurred to him he pronounced "brilliant." This scheme was to get to his lodgings as fast as possible, provide a bottle of old Tom, and, in the absence of Mrs. Jones at Mr. Tinglebottom's chapel, by a pretence that he wanted his landlord to give him "a good talking to," induce Mr. Jones to come up to his room and ply him well with liquor until he got into that obliviousness that he could be effectually "pumped" of all the secrets Will wanted to know.

After he had reached home, and sat himself down in his "Lord Nelson"—a name he gave to his old wooden chair, because like that hero it had but one arm—he commenced his designs upon Mr. Obadiah Jones by ordering his little boy to tidy up the room and then go for the gin.

"Now you run downstairs," he said after his son had placed the bottle on the ricketty table, "and give my compliments to Obadiah Jones, and ask him if he would come up here and give me a good talking to; tell him, Bob, my spirit's remorseful."

Bob Sparks was not long in executing the delicate commission his father had intrusted him to perform, and he soon returned with the proprietor of the "little T shop."

Now Will had to play his cards with tact, for Mr. Jones, besides being a Tinglebottomian, was a staunch teetotaler. But Will did not believe in Jones's total abstinence.

After they had faced each other—Will Sparks and his landlord—the former opened his campaign.

"I think you smoke when the missus is out of the way?"

Obadiah nodded assent, and Will provided him with a pipe, and made himself a stiff glass of gin-and-water, pushing the jug containing the latter fluid towards Mr. Jones.

"Ah, guv'ner," said Will, "I wish I could do as you do. Water's the stuff after all. Yet somehow or other it never did agree with my stomach; it makes my inside feel as though I'd been indulging in a convivial dinner of snowballs."

Mr. Jones gravely admitted "that he had sometimes experienced that unpleasant sensation himself."

This admission Will took speedy advantage of, by temptingly pushing the bottle of spirits to the grocer, who, after his host had promised secrecy, mixed himself a glass, and during much conversation about Will's contrition, another glass was drank by the staunch teetotaler. Obadiah began to be elated—drank a third glass—sang a song—but, fatal to Will's scheme, in the midst of the song Mrs. Jones returned, and with Mr. Tinglebottom, found her way to Will's room, and there encountered her husband in the most jovial condition that gin-and-water could inspire a man with.

The terrified woman, with the assistance of her revered pastor, walked off her now trembling husband, and with an eye of fire and a tongue of wrath, begged that "Mr. Sparks would at once suit himself with other lodgings, for that he shouldn't stop there to bring her husband to perdition."

Will took but little notice of the woman's tongue—he was too much occupied with the chagrin her return from chapel so unexpectedly had occasioned him by frustrating his schemes to get particulars about the brooch, if not to obtain it.

Mr. Wetherby sat in his chair on the evening he had appointed with Will Sparks for the latter to call upon him, a prey to no little anxiety and expectation.

"This is the evening—Friday—the eventful evening which may be an epoch in my life," he said, as he looked for the twentieth time at his watch. "This, too, is nearly the hour—seven o'clock. It wants only ten minutes to the time. I wonder if my new ally will come!"

This wonder was soon set at rest, for precisely as the clock in the Temple chimed the hour, a gentle knock was given at the door.

"Come in!" cried George.

And Mr. Sparks, holding his fur cap respectfully before his stomach, immediately after came in.

"Punctual to the minute, my friend," said George.

"Yes, sir, pretty well, I think, for that matter," returned Will.

"Well, what news do you bring me to-night?"

"Why, sir, I haven't been able to do much yet; but I don't despair of better luck next time."

"How is that?"

"I laid a train, sir, and I set fire to it; but, dash my buttons! it flared up the wrong way, and blowed us all up together."

"My good fellow, do speak a little intelligibly, I beg."

"Well, then, sir," replied Will, "what I mean is this—that

the attempt I made to pump Obadiah Jones didn't get on so well as one might have wished—missing fire, sir, so to say, in the very moment of triumph, through circumstances which human nature could not foresee. Otherwise, sir, I haven't yet been able to manage any other dodge to wheedle 'em out, though, I dare say, if you give me a little longer time to do it in, I shall be able to drop upon the right plan in a day or two."

Will thereupon related to his employer a complete account of the attempt and failure of his clever scheme to worm out of Mr. Obadiah Jones his wife's secret as to the disposal of the little miniature which had belonged to Emma Evelyn.

When he had finished, Mr. Wetherby paced the room two or three times in silent meditation.

"I am afraid, my friend," he said, at length, "it will be necessary to employ the services of a regular detective to secure the possession of this lost trinket, for get possession of it somehow I will."

"Supposing you send a bobby—why, sir, that there seems just the way *not* to get what you want. Matilda's a cunning beggar, she is; whatever are her faults, I must say *that* for her, sir; and, depend upon it, rather than let herself be scotched for stealing, she'd smash the brooch into dust as fine as violet powder. You'd better let me have one more try, sir."

"If you think you have any chance, my friend, let it be as you say. It is not such an urgent matter for a week or so, except to relieve my suspense and anxiety. Meanwhile, here is another trifle on account to remunerate you for your trouble.

Whereupon, with many thanks and assurances, Mr. Sparks took his leave of George Wetherby, and descended the staircase.

"Dash my whiskers!" muttered Will, as he turned into the courtyard, "this young lawyer-fellow is a trump, anyhow. It is something like a pleasure to do business for him, even if a fellow didn't take a little satisfaction in it on his own hook.

As he proceeded eastwards, it not unnaturally occurred to so thirsty a soul as himself that, having fallen into such luck's way as he had that evening, he could very well afford a trifle wherewith to drink the health of the generous donor. No sooner was this idea conceived than it was executed, and entering a public-house where he, from the familiar nod he bestowed upon the barmaid, appeared to be well-known, he ordered a tankard of ale to be set before him. While he was enjoying the draught, Charley set up a loud and defiant bark, which was responded to by one as loud and defiant from another dog, who looked the very counterpart of Charley.

"Charley, come here, you rascal, come here!" cried Mr. Sparks.

"Here, Jenny; come here, you warmint, come here!" cried another voice, addressing the other dog.

Mr. Sparks not unnaturally glanced in the direction from which this sound proceeded. He perceived a tall, gawky fellow sitting on a form at the further side of the place, and drinking and smoking with several other questionable characters of both sexes.

There was something apparently in the looks of this man which caused Will to start with surprise, and then to edge round the counter towards that portion of the shop where the other was sitting, in order to have a better view of him. This more minute inspection seemed to prove satisfactory, for suddenly turning upon the unprepossessing stranger, he administered to that person a hearty slap of greeting upon the shoulder.

"Hulloa, Tom!" he cried, "is that you?"

"Hulloa, Will Sparks!" he returned, "is that you?"

"I thought you was over in America!" said Will.

"And so I was in Ameriky," replied Tom Shaw, sternly, for the speaker was no other than the ex-gamekeeper of Waverney Court; "but I'm not in Ameriky now—I've come back agin."

"So I see you have, Tom."

"Yes; I've come back agin," repeated Shaw, after a pause, as though there was some doubt of it.

At this Mr. Shaw insisted upon standing Sam for anything drinkable his friend might choose to select, after which Mr. Sparks returned the compliment to him, and so forth.

"You didn't find America a good spec, then?" said Sparks.

"Well, as for that, mate——" and Mr. Shaw shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, that's it, is it? I mind you, Tom," and Mr. Sparks shrugged his.

"Not so good, mate, as coming back agin, howsum'dever."

"Going to set up again in the game-keeping line?"

"Not if I know it; leastways, mate, not as you mean."

The two gentlemen eyed each other as if each had some important secret weighing on his mind, which he was resolved the other should not penetrate, and smoked their short clay pipes in a silence that was impressive and profound.

Will Sparks was the first to break the pause.

"If not as I mean, Tom," said he, "how then?"

The ex-gamekeeper glanced cautiously around him, and then winking mysteriously, said, "I'm goin' to keep a little game on my own hook, mate. That's better nor keepin' other people's, arn't it?"

"Oh, you're going to keep a little game on your own hook, are you? And whereabouts are you going to keep 'em?"

Whether Mr. Tom Shaw had not made up his mind upon this point, or whether from some other cause, he again glanced cautiously about him, then looked up at the ceiling, then down at the

floor, as though he were reflecting; at last, winking again at his companion, he touched his forehead, and said, "Here, mate; here!"

"Going to keep your game in your head, are you?" returned Will, drily. "But, dash my wig, Tom, if your words have got any meaning at all, I can't fish it out; or, perhaps, Tom—perhaps you're only asking a riddle?"

And Mr. Sparks, taking his pipe out of his mouth, seemed to be perusing with intense curiosity the curling smoke which the bowl emitted.

Shaw brought his lips close down to his comrade's ear.

"I used to be on the estate belonging to Sir Walter Lee—that is Waverney Court, at Waverney, and so, in course, you know, Will."

Sparks nodded, and said, "Go on, Tommy; what then?"

"I'm going back there now, mate; that's where I'm going."

"I thought you said you weren't, Tommy?"

"No, Will, I didn't say I weren't, because I were."

"Well, this here is what you may call a puzzler, Tom. This caps me, anyhow. First of all you say you ain't going to turn keeper again, and then you say you are, and then you say you ain't!"

"I said I was goin' down to Wav'ney agin', didn't I?"

"Fire away, old boy; so you did say that," rejoined Will, nodding.

"And I said I was goin' to have a little game of my own, didn't I?"

Will nodded again.

"You see that, mate, don't you?" added Shaw, waving his pipe with mysterious significance, and looking preternaturally grave.

"I see about all of it, Tommy, that anybody can see," replied Sparks, beginning to lose patience at the roundabout procedure; "and that's about as much as a blind donkey can see of his own tail."

"Well, then—I'm goin' down to Wav'ney to see if I can't worm a little of the rhino out of my late master, Sir Walter Lee;—and *that's my little game*; now d'ye see?"

Sparks responded by a prolonged whistle.

"You're a deep 'un, Tom," digging his fist into his companion's ribs. "But how are you going to get over him that way? Didn't he pay you your wages, Tom?"

"The fact is, mate, while I was in my old place I got into one or two little secrets, that I fancy Sir Walter will pay me to keep dark; now d'ye see?"

"Why, what's he been doing, Tommy?" he exclaimed. "What's he been doing, then?"

Mr. Shaw did not, however, seem much disposed to gratify his friend's curiosity any further. Perhaps he thought he had said rather too much already.

"He's not been doin' much, mate; as I knows of; still, he'll stump up, I dare swear, when I ask him, just for old acquaintance sake."

"I wish I'd got one or two acquaintances of the same sort, then, Tom. I can't make out how *you* have."

"Ah," returned Shaw, drily; "there is some things people can't make out, mate. But won't you have nothing more to drink to-night?"

This sudden turn in the dialogue Mr. Sparks interpreted as a strong intimation that the former subject might as well be dropped. The two friends having spent the remainder of the evening in recounting their mutual reminiscences, and in imbibing no inconsiderable quantity of liquor of various kinds, and at each other's alternate expense, at length separated for the night.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN ELUCIDATION OF GRACE'S DREAM.

"AND now, dear Grace, now that we are rambling together for the first time as man and wife beneath the old oaks that have withstood the decay of ages, and have watched over the destinies of many generations of my ancient race, let me once more bid you welcome to the home of my fathers, and hail you as mistress of Waverney Court."

Sir Walter Lee bent tenderly over the lovely girl, whose slender waist his arm encircled.

"Oh, Walter, you are very good to me; you are ever thinking how you can make me even happier than I am," his fair companion murmured, looking up into his eyes with the gentle trusting love light beaming in softened effulgence from her own.

"Then, Grace, you *are* happy?" exclaimed the young man, eagerly.

The girl looked into his face with an expression of ineffable sweetness and trusting love.

"I am happy always with you, dear Walter," she replied, gently.

"Grace, dear, dear Grace; my own, my wife, my love for ever!" he cried, clasping her with passionate tenderness in a prolonged embrace.

He turned his eyes to heaven, and ere he released her, his lips moved as though he were imploring a benediction from above upon his young wife's head.

"Under yonder elm, dear, we first met. Do you recollect that day?"

"A girl rarely forgets the spot where she first beheld her husband, Walter."

"But you were a little thing in short frocks then, Grace; and I a clumsy school-boy, my mind thick with visions of college life, with young hopes, not for *you*, Grace, but for the hollow pomps and vanities of the world. I must have been an object little likely to attract a maiden's fancy."

"And yet, Walter, I remember you,—even as you describe yourself—well."

"It is impossible you, a child, Grace, could have loved me then?"

"Perhaps not, Walter; but I have learned to love you since."

And as she spoke she clung still closer to his side.

"Ah, Grace, a soldier of fortune, driven about from one end of the world to the other, as I have been, must have seen many pretty faces, dear; and I deny not, that like most young fellows, I have been attracted by them; the newest seeming the prettiest, until a fresh one appeared. But when I returned from my vagrant pilgrimage, and came hither to take possession of a new and brighter fortune than had ever dawned upon me before, little did I think, dear, of the bright vision of girlish loveliness that was to lend to life fresh charms and beauties, which I little expected it would ever wear again for me. Yes, Grace, you are the only woman I have ever really loved; for whom I have experienced that pure affection and reverential love with which I should regard an angel: a love, dear, which is yours, and only yours, for ever."

The girl hung down her head and heaved a sigh.

"How can you be so sure, Walter?" said she, "that your love for me will never change? You say that you liked other girls before you saw me, and yet you changed for them."

A dark shade, as if of anguish, passed over the young man's face, and he turned away his head, so that the fearful expression might not be revealed.

"No, Grace," he replied, in a voice that trembled slightly, as if with a passion that was intense. "I said not that I ever *loved* any other than you. I may have been vanquished by passion, but not by love; and when the hot fever has passed away, leaving only dissatisfaction and vain regrets, I have longed for something found not then—an attachment that was required; the communing of a kindred spirit—the elevating purity of such a love as thine. *Now*, dear, when I walk out in the evening, you lingering by my side, with the beauties of mother Nature around me, and the star-spangled canopy of heaven smiling upon us from above; when I feel your little heart beating against my own, and hear your voice murmur the music of truth and affection into my ear, I can scarcely believe I am not in a happy dream from which I shall awake too soon; and when I look up at those shining orbs which even now peep out of the twilight, I almost expect them, Grace, to make

some signal from their spheres, warning me that the cup of happiness may, alas ! soon be dashed away."

Somehow, as he ceased speaking, the girl shivered violently, as if she were stricken with a chill. The young man contemplated her ashy pale face anxiously ; and—yes—she quivered again as violently as before.

"Are you cold, my dear?" he whispered tenderly ; "shall we turn indoors again ? perhaps the evening air has chilled you?"

"No, no ; I don't feel chilly," the girl replied, with hesitation.

Despite the assurance, however, she still continued trembling.

Sir Walter Lee stood suddenly still, and catching his wife by the arm, turned her face full towards his own.

"Grace," he cried, "you are ill ! You cannot deceive me ! do not attempt to do so, I entreat—I implore you !"

"Silly fellow ! I am not ill," rejoined Lady Lee, tapping her husband playfully upon the cheek, and with a light, forced laugh. "It is very silly of me, I know ; but if you wish me to tell you what disturbed me, I will. But, really, it is so very foolish, I am afraid you will laugh at me."

"Laugh at what gives you pain ! Be assured, dear, I can never do *that*. I will seek to remove your uneasiness and alarm."

"Well, then, sir, if you must know—but no, really I feel quite ashamed of myself before I begin."

"Go on, Grace. Have nothing concealed from your husband. If he cannot comfort you and advise you in your troubles, who can?"

Half pouting and very much blushing now, my Lady Lee proceeded to explain the cause of her sudden trembling and alarm. She stated that a long while ago, the very evening, in fact, that she had first seen him after his long absence from Waverney, she had had a dream in which he was mysteriously mixed up, and which had very much frightened her at the time. She had often thought of it since, and always with a vague, undefined terror of she knew not what. His speaking about being in a dream and about the stars making a sign in the heavens, had reminded her forcibly of it now.

"Foolish child, to be so superstitious !" exclaimed Sir Walter, laughing to reassure her. "But tell me this wondrous dream, as I am mixed up in it."

"Well, then, Mr. Inquisitive," said the girl, half playfully, but still with a slight touch of her former tremor in her voice, "my dream, as nearly as I can remember its disjointed incidents, was this. I thought, dear, that I was rambling in a pleasant grove, in which a brook was murmuring. Birds in countless numbers were singing in the trees, which emitted a powerful perfume. My poor sister Emma and you were by my side."

She could not help a little shudder at this point of her narrative; but she was reassured by a pressure of the hand from Sir Walter Lee.

"Go on, Grace," said he; "and what happened next?"

"Then, Walter," she continued, with evident awe in her voice, "a strange feeling of terror came over me—what it was I am unconscious; I only knew that its influence was upon me. And when I looked up at the heavens, the stars, which had been shining out in quiet beauty—like they are even now, Walter—suddenly changed into burning letters of fire, forming the words—oh, I cannot bear to think of them even yet—*Three Children of One Fate.*"

"That was indeed an unaccountable sort of a dream, I must admit," interposed the baronet, with an amused smile. "After this wonderful phenomenon, what did you see next?"

"I thought that poor Emma was snatched away from me by some invisible power; and that your uncle, at the same moment, fell back upon the ground, a bleeding corpse."

"Good gracious! and *that* was really true, at all events."

"Whilst I was stricken motionless with dismay and horror, the little stream, which had been rippling the music of nature, suddenly changed into a human voice. That voice was *yours*, Walter; and it was humming a song that I have often heard you sing when, years ago, you were staying at Waverney Court. Then the perfume of the flowers and trees seemed to change also, and—oh! Walter, it makes me feel faint as I think of it now—it became *human breath*, and I felt a pair of hot, scorching lips pressing my own."

"In your dream, of course?" interrupted Sir Walter, hastily.

"In my dream, of course," replied her ladyship, blushing.

"Very fine to tell your husband all this, madam, even though it was a dream," rejoined Sir Walter, affecting to be jealous, though evidently relieved at being informed it was only a dream.

"Never mind, sir," returned Lady Lee, smiling, in spite of herself; "the lips were your own, and I am not ashamed to dream that I was kissed by my husband."

"Nor yet ashamed to *be* kissed by him, I hope, when you are in no dream."

Whereupon her ladyship's lips were forthwith pressed by another pair, which were far too tangible to be the creation of any dream. And, it must be confessed, that she looked anything but ashamed at the proceeding; quite the reverse of it, in fact, and rather proud of it than not.

"Did your ladyship dream anything further about her future excellent husband, may I have the vanity to ask?"

"I may as well puff up your vanity, sir, to the full extent, since I have already gone so far," returned Grace, smiling. "When I had recovered from the shock I experienced at being saluted in such an unusual fashion, and upon glancing up at the sky, I perceived the stars twinkling as usual; but as I continued to gaze at them, they all, except two, suddenly disappeared off the face of the heavens. While I was looking, with mingled wonder and dread, at these two solitary stars, they seemed to grow larger and larger, and brighter and brighter, until at last they filled up all the world, and I fancied that they were *two great eyes* staring into my own, and drawing me away by their influence."

"Very good—very good, indeed! And then——"

"And then, sir, I awoke."

"Quite time you did, upon my word!" ejaculated Sir Walter, indulging freely in a peal of laughter.

"I said you would laugh at me," answered the girl, half-disposed to laugh herself, but not a little inclined to cry with vexation. "If you knew how this dream had oppressed me with its influence, Sir Walter, I think you would be more kind to me than to laugh."

Which little remonstrance had the immediate effect of causing my Lady Lee to experience a repetition of the mysterious sensation of two lips pressing her own; after which Sir Walter at once became as grave and serious as anybody could desire.

"Now, you silly child," said he, "now that I have heard this dream which you have the impudence to tell me so seriously has caused you such an amount of anxiety and terror, let us rest ourselves on this little rustic seat while we reconsider all the details of that dream, and endeavour to ascertain if they may not be traced to natural causes that are well comprehended by the metaphysician."

"I am very willing to be persuaded, sir," said she, smiling. "You will find few listeners so ready to be convinced as I am in this case, that they have been foolish. In fact, sir, I am aware of it already."

"Which certainly affords me good grounds to begin the attack upon, I must confess," replied Lee, playfully. "Now to begin. In the first place," he continued, "this dream occurred, I think you say, upon the evening when, on my return to Waverney after a two years' absence, you saw me a few moments at the Rectory garden-gate?"

"Yes; and I fancy, perhaps, the reason of my confusing Emma with my dream was because we had that very morning received a letter informing us that she was dying; so it is certainly not strange that I should dream of her."

"Ah! you have, I perceive, already an inkling of the philoso-

phical explanation of your dream," exclaimed Sir Walter, quickly. "When we fall asleep, the mind, for the time being, loses some of its faculties, and that of the will is deprived of its operative powers, whilst the reasoning faculties are always in some measure diminished, though not destroyed. In sleep no new ideas are created, but the old ones run, as it were, in a sort of groove, connected with one another by what is termed the association of ideas."

"What you say is certainly very reasonable, so far," the girl rejoined.

"Let us continue our examination, my Gracie," her husband proceeded, cheerfully. "In regard to your humble servant appearing so prominently, I presume it may be traced to the fact that I renewed my future wife's acquaintance on that evening, and perhaps, before that amiable lady fell into her slumbers, she might have done me the honour of bestowing upon me a casual thought."

"That is true, indeed, Walter," returned Grace; "and, further than that, just before I went to bed, I was singing a song which you used to sing, and which was the cause of my hearing the same strain in my dream."

"But let us continue. What is the next difficulty to be discussed?"

Lady Lee shook her head doubtfully.

"Though you have explained the rest of my dream satisfactorily, how do you account, sir, for my picturing the mysterious sign in the heavens, linking you, Emma, and myself, in one fate? Of course, I can easily see the likelihood of my dreaming about your poor uncle becoming—ugh! how horrible it is to contemplate!

a bleeding corpse, inasmuch as it was only that evening that he was murdered, and my mind was naturally full of that horrid tragedy when I went to rest. But how, sir, do you account for the rest, I say?"

A low, musical, mocking laugh flowed from the lips of Sir Walter Lee.

"How do I explain it, my little credulous visionary?" said he. "As easily as it is possible to explain a sum in simple addition. I shall say nothing further about that part of your vision in which you delighted in corpses, and so forth, because you have had the sagacity to give a very excellent and convincing explanation of that yourself. As for the 'three children of one fate,' I confess the explanation is the simplest in the world. You were out in the garden when you saw me that night, and, to my own knowledge, the stars were shining very brightly. I see nothing more likely than that you should dream of them, nor that in your dream you should associate myself with my uncle, your sister, and yourself,

since all four of us were uppermost in your mind when you fell asleep; nor do I think it strange, considering the horrible tragedy that had taken place at Waverney just before, in addition to the fact that your sister was dying, perhaps, dear, that your dream should take a weird and unnatural form. As for the perfumes of the flowers and trees you mention in your dream, they were, most likely, merely the perfumes of the flowers and shrubs in the garden."

Lady Lee sat musing, a thoughtful smile playing, ever and anon, about her lips.

"I do think I have been foolish in ever allowing my superstitious fancies to work upon my imagination as I have," she said, at length.

"Spoken like a true and brave woman, as my Gracie is!" exclaimed Sir Walter, pressing her with rapture to his heart.

Scarcely had the endearing words escaped the speaker's lips than the girl suddenly uttered a sharp scream.

"Look!" she cried, pointing towards a clump of trees about thirty yards away. "Oh, Walter, what is that?"

"What is what, darling?" returned Sir Walter, glancing hastily in the direction indicated. "I see nothing to alarm you, dear."

"I am certain I saw a shadow!" rejoined the girl, with agitation. "It was not fancy: I know it was real!"

"A shadow, Grace!"

"Aye; it was the *shadow of a man!*"

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SHADOW IN THE PARK.

"GRACE, my dear girl, I believe you are dreaming *now*," exclaimed Sir Walter, with a slight perturbation in his tone.

Lady Lee seemed hurt by the remark, yet she clung more closely to her husband's arm, and looked wistfully into his face.

"Do not be angry with me, Walter," she said. "I am certain I was not deceived. I saw the tall shadow of a man in the moonlight, fall across the ground by yonder clump of trees, where it disappeared again."

"Stay here one moment, Grace, and I will soon be satisfied as to who is loitering about my grounds like a thief."

And the young man was about to start forward in the direction in which the trembling girl had pointed. She caught him, however, by the arm.

"No, no—do not go, Walter, dear!—do not leave me here alone! I shall die with terror if you do. Let me go indoors; the night has turned chilly, and—and I feel cold."

The two turned towards Waverney Court, from the windows of

which several lights were now beaming in the distance. Once or twice as they walked on silently Lady Lee glanced furtively behind her, as though fearful someone might be following their footsteps; and then, being reassured on this point, her eyes would seek her husband's face; as if anxious to read his secret thoughts by its outward expression. That face was, however, perfectly impassive; not the twitching of a nerve, or the movement of a muscle, betrayed the inward working of the mind.

"I will rejoin you in the drawing-room in a few minutes, dear," said Lee, having escorted his fair companion to the house.

"Are you not coming in, Walter?" demanded she, in surprise.

"In a few seconds I shall be back again."

He was turning away, but she caught him tightly by the arm.

"You are going into the park again," she whispered. "You are going to search after the—the man, who startled me just now."

"Nonsense, my dear girl," he laughed gaily, and shaking himself from her. "Make yourself as comfortable as you can for about five minutes. I shall be back again by that time, you may depend upon it,—long before you have taken off your bonnet, and are ready to sing me a song."

"I wish you wouldn't go, Walter," said the girl, looking up into his face wistfully; but not offering again to detain him.

Laughing playfully at the beseeching look the young wife gave him, Sir Walter Lee hastened from the house, and retraced his steps to the spot from which he and Lady Lee had just now come.

"Who the deuce it can be who thinks proper to get loafing about my grounds, and eaves-dropping, when I and my wife are in privacy, I know not; and it is well for that individual—if there is anyone at all—that I do not; for if I come across him, I will warrant he shall give a good account of himself."

As he spoke, he pulled his two hands from his pockets. In each hand glittered in the silver moonlight the burnished steel barrel of a pistol, the priming of which he halted a moment to examine.

Arrived at the rustic seat, upon which he and Grace had a little while before been resting, he again stopped short, and peered very cautiously about him. The moon at this instant emerged from behind a dark cloud, and flooded the broad expanse with silver light, but throwing every tree and prominent object into deeper shadow. While he stood thus, earnestly seeking to penetrate the obscurity which enveloped the clump of trees, amongst which Lady Lee had so strongly affirmed the shadow had disappeared, the tall form of a man emerged into the light, and approached him with wide and rapid strides.

"Who goes there?" demanded the baronet, his finger pressing the trigger of his pistol.

"Is that you, Sir Walter?" a hoarse voice replied.

Sir Walter Lee staggered backwards.

"Shaw!" he almost gasped.

"Yes, Sir Walter," returned the man, insolently.

"What do you want here? Why do you come to persecute me?"

"I don't want to persecute nobody, Sir Walter; not I."

"Why, then, do you come here? Villain, is this the way you keep your word?"

"Why do I come here, Sir Walter?" rejoined the gamekeeper with a grim laugh. "Lor', now, Sir Walter; I should have thought you might have guessed."

"You have not performed your part of the contract, Shaw, as I did mine. Why did you not remain abroad, as you agreed to do?" retorted the young man, drawing his slim form haughtily up to its full height.

"You see, Sir Walter, Ameriky is a werry niceish sort of a place so long as the blunt lasts—ah!"

The ruffian recoiled one instant, for his eye had alighted upon the brace of pistols which the other held menacingly before him. The next moment, however, the gleaming barrel of a revolver was pointing at Sir Walter's head.

"If *that's* your little game, Sir Walter, two can play at it as well as one," he ejaculated, with a savage snarl and a hideous grin of triumph. "You were thinking of putting me out of the way, were you!"

"Fool!" returned Lee, scornfully, "I do not seek to do you any harm."

"Thank you, Sir Walter," replied Shaw, with a sneer; "but if you're so kind towards me as that, I don't see what you want with those pretty little barkers you've got so snug and handy."

"Do you suppose, then, that if I *wished* to chastise your insolence, I should be deterred from fear of your revolver? Put up your arms, I will do you no injury."

Lee returned his pistols to the pockets from which he had taken them. Shaw, muttering something between his teeth, slowly and with hesitation, imitated the example.

"You want more money, I suppose?" said young Lee.

"That's just the werry identical thing I do want."

"Will you go abroad again?"

"Certainly, Sir Walter, if you tip up."

"*And remain there?*" added Lee, sternly.

"That I'll promise most faithfully this time," returned Shaw, with a sickly grin.

"Promises with *you* count for nothing. I will take care that

you do not come back this time. I will make it your *interest* to remain there. Tell me what you expect me to do for you."

"They tell me, Sir Walter, that you have been and got married while I was away."

"Well, sir, and what of that?" retorted the baronet, haughtily.

"Oh! nothing of it, Sir Walter. She is now, at the Court, I think, isn't she?"

"Once more," he cried, after a pause, "will you tell me what you desire?"

"And I thought, Sir Walter," the fellow pursued, "that perhaps you mightn't care about her ladyship bein' frightened by such a chap as I am. Besides, Sir Walter, if her ladyship were to ask me what such a fellow as me wanted about here, I might forget that her ladyship doesn't know one or two little things about—about *her husband!*"

Lee sprang forward, and seizing the fellow by the collar of his rough pea-jacket with both hands, shook him with such violence that he looked like an unresisting figure in his arms. Ere the game-keeper had recovered from the surprise into which the onslaught had thrown him, he was hurled, like a log of wood, to the ground.

Having thus dashed his antagonist to the ground, the young soldier drew himself up haughtily, panting for breath, and, with folded arms, contemplated the vanquished ruffian.

"Very well, Sir Walter, I won't forget this here," growled Shaw, as he scrambled to his feet, and turned with the surly, yet submissive aspect of a beaten cur, upon the now perfectly composed young man.

"No," replied he, "you had better not forget it, or I may, on the next occasion, administer a still more forcible reminder to you. Perhaps you will now be able to come to the point without further useless and impertinent discussion."

"I didn't go to say anything to make you angry, Sir Walter," returned the fellow, in a much humbler tone than that in which he had spoken hitherto.

"As you do not appear to know exactly what you want me to do for you, I suppose I may surmise you wish to get out of me just as much as ever you can extort from me?"

"Why, yes, Sir Walter, I 'spect it is something just about that. I don't want to be hard upon you, Sir Walter—you know that. I'm a poor man, and I only want what I may call my rights."

"Talk not to me of your rights, sir; you have no claims upon me," interrupted Lee, sternly. "If you will give me no more of your impertinent insolence, I will inform you as briefly as practicable of what I am prepared and willing to do. I will remind you,

in the first place, that but little more than a twelvemonth ago, in consideration of my paying you one hundred pounds in cash down, and remitting to you at New York a second instalment of a like amount, upon your satisfying me of your arrival at that place, you faithfully promised me you would remain absent from England and would trouble me no more. With exactitude did I fulfil my part of the contract. How you have adhered to yours you very well know."

Tom Shaw was about to interrupt, but the other made a stern gesture, imposing silence.

"I remind you of all this," pursued Lee, "because you will thus perceive that it is impossible I can trust your word in the remotest degree again. Now, listen to my proposal. I will give you at once the sum of fifty pounds——"

"Only fifty, Sir Walter! Oh, come now, don't be hard upon a fellow!"

"Fifty pounds only will I give you down," Lee returned, firmly. "That, indeed, I will supply you with to enable you to get out of the kingdom once more. Settle yourself permanently at New York, or where else in the States you please, and while you remain there, I will forward you in half-yearly remittances the sum of fifty pounds a-year——"

"Come now, Sir Walter," expostulated Shaw, whining, "make it a hundred!"

"Hear me to the end," continued Lee. "I will allow you this, you understand, so long as you trouble me no more; but mark my words! if you ever seek me out again, never another penny of mine shall you touch, for rather than be subjected to your continual threatening and extortion, I will brave the worst, and defy you!"

"You wouldn't like that, Sir Walter, anyhow!"

"Perhaps I may not like it; but perhaps I might dare you to do your worst, nevertheless. Perhaps, also, my man, I may know of one or two little things that you would not like should be made public. Now do we understand each other? Shall it be war between us or peace?"

"I agree, Sir Walter; I've no call to wish to do you any harm," replied Shaw, after a pause.

"Meet me, then, at this spot to-morrow at sunset. I will have the money ready. Meanwhile, keep yourself out of observation, if you please."

"All right, Sir Walter. Good night."

Without deigning a reply, Sir Walter Lee returned to the house.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SIR WALTER'S LIE.

SIR WALTER LEE found Grace in the drawing-room awaiting his return with considerable anxiety. Before venturing into the presence of his young wife, he had taken the precaution to divest himself of the pistols, and endeavoured to appear before her as composed in his manner as possible. Nevertheless, his face was so pale that Lady Lee started when she saw him.

"There, sir," she cried, at first speaking playfully, to greet him as he came into the room, "you promised me you would be back in five minutes at the most, and here have you been gone more than half-an-hour. But oh, Walter! how pale you are! You are ill!" and she looked into his ashy-white face, anxiously.

Lee laughed with forced gaiety, and tried to soothe her by caresses.

"I am not ill, Gracie. Do I really look so?" said he.

"You look dreadful, Walter," resumed the girl. "What has happened? Are you hurt? Oh, Walter, disguise nothing from me, I implore you!"

"Keep nothing from you?" repeated her husband, stroking her beautiful hair, playfully. "Well, then, I will not; and so I will inform you that, like a young lady whom we both know, I have had a very frightful dream."

"A dream, sir! What do you mean?"

"I have had a dream, and I thought I was standing out in the park, just where my little Gracie was so terribly startled by the mysterious shadow of—well—of a man."

"Ah! tell me, sir, have you found out anything about——?"

"All in good time, madam," replied Sir Walter, waving his hand, and smiling. "Let me continue my dream, if you please. And I thought, dear, that it was just such a lovely night as this is, and the moon and the stars were shining out brightly."

"Walter, you are mocking me!" cried my lady, in an offended tone, and pouting in a most captivating manner.

"And I thought," pursued Sir Walter, "all at once, that you, dear, who were standing by my side, suddenly changed into—I beg your ladyship's pardon—but into a little—a very little donkey!"

Lady Lee had been listening with rapt attention, the gravity of the speaker puzzling her greatly. But now Sir Walter smiled, and despite her uneasiness of mind, this burlesquing of her own dream amused her much. She could not help laughing at the very uncomplimentary comparison of herself with a donkey.

"A very pretty donkey, I admit, madam; and one with ex-

tremely short ears, and which had, without flattery, a very soft and pleasant voice. And while I was looking about me to ascertain the cause of this wonderful change, the donkey took alarm at a shadow amongst the trees, and suddenly went scampering away as hard as ever she could gallop to seek shelter from that dread evil her imagination had evoked. Feeling some compassion for the poor beast, I determined to ascertain what it was my poor little donkey was terrified by. So I turned towards the spot, and a very brief examination explained to me the whole of the mystery. For there, lying quietly under an old elm-tree, and looking as innocent and unconscious as I dare say he really was, was that fine stag whom his new mistress honoured only this very day with a strong expression of her admiration."

"A stag!" cried my lady, laughing outright and clapping her hands merrily. "Do you really mean to say, Walter, that it was only a *stag* which frightened me so dreadfully just now?"

"Merely that most graceful of quadrupeds, my dear girl," replied Sir Walter.

Very careful now was Sir Walter to keep his wife's attention diverted as much as possible from the late scene enacted in the park grounds; begging her to sing over this new song to him, or play over that new piece, with such incessant assiduity that I am sure her amiable ladyship's throat and fingers must have been equally tired before the evening was over.

On the following morning, Grace was amusing herself in the beautiful garden which completely surrounded Waverney Court with a mass of flowers, when Sir Walter came behind her, with his travelling-bag in hand, as though he were about to depart immediately upon a journey. Kissing her, Sir Walter told her that he had to go up to town for an hour or two that morning, but that he should positively return in the afternoon in time for tea, and entreated her to amuse herself the best way she could until that time, adding that he had sent over to the Rectory to ask Mrs. Evelyn to come and keep her daughter company.

"Must you go to-day, Walter?" said the girl, insinuatingly. "Would not another time do as well?"

"Impossible, my dear girl," replied Lee. "It is imperative I should go to the City to-day, or depend upon it, Gracie, I would not leave you. So it is useless for you to try and wheedle me into any delay. The fact is, I am obliged to get a draught cashed at my banker's. We must have money, you know, dear; what a thing it is we can't do without that!"

Lady Lee sighed, but as there was no gainsaying the truth of this she quietly yielded the point.

Sir Walter departed, and true to his promise was home again

half-an-hour before tea-time, which at Waverney Court was six o'clock. Mrs. Evelyn had brought over Mrs. Barber with her that afternoon, and these two ladies remained to take tea ; during which meal Sir Walter exerted himself to the utmost to appear in good spirits ; but somehow, the quick eye of my lady remarked that he occasionally seemed very absent-minded, and that when the tea was over, he walked over to the window sometimes, to look out, and then returned in silence to his seat.

Presently, while Grace and the two ladies were in consultation, Lee quietly slipped out of the room. So skilfully did he manage this that no one but Grace was aware he had gone.

"What a beautiful evening, my dear!" said Mrs. Evelyn, looking out of the window just at this time.

"How golden seem the clouds in the west!" added her friend.

"Yes," replied Lady Lee. "*It is now just sunset.*"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

PERSEVERANCE AS USUAL MEETS WITH SUCCESS.

WITH very great difficulty Will Sparks found his way to his lodgings after his carouse with Tom Shaw. But having, however, reached the door of the renowned "Little T Chest," and having failed in his unsteady endeavours to get the key into the lock, he leaned against the door, and regaled himself with a pipe and sundry boisterous comic songs, much to the disturbance of Matilda Jones, who came down in angry mood to let her lodger in, but more with the determination to give him a "bit of her mind."

The street-door against which the musical clothes-line man leaned being suddenly opened by Mrs. Jones, he fell into the arms of his indignant landlady, who screamed so loudly that it brought her amiable husband to the rescue. Obadiah quickly discovered the state of affairs, and by dint of persuasion and pushing, especially pushing, he got Mr. Sparks to his chamber, and placing him outside his bed, left him to his drunken slumbers.

After a disturbed sleep, Will Sparks awoke with all the disagreeable feelings that attend upon the waking of those who have taken a glass too much. With his hands across his aching brow, he began to have some dim recollection that he had not been over-polite to his landlady, and began to fear a visit from the strong-minded woman. If so, he thought it best to play the repentant sinner, and appease her wrath.

His fears were quickly realised. Mrs. Jones made her appearance, and Will played the penitent successfully ; his landlady felt for him, sympathised with him, and after a long religious conver-

sation, she promised that in the evening she would invite Mr. Tinglebottom to take tea with her, and that Will should be of the party, and that he would then have an opportunity to be taken into the fold of the Tinglebottomians.

As the afternoon wore on—the very afternoon, in fact, upon which, as the reader will recollect, Sir Walter Lee had arranged to meet the gamekeeper, Tom Shaw, at sunset in the park of Waverney Court—as the afternoon wore on, I say, and the time drew near for the interesting meeting between the pastor and Mr. Will Sparks, the spirit of the latter gentleman sank within him, and he would very gladly have backed out of the edifying gathering which was in store for him.

While he was in the midst of these thoughts, Mr. Obadiah Jones came creeping in, rubbing his hands and looking sanctimonious. Would Mr. Sparks come downstairs now? and our young friend Robert, would he come too? But Robert, looking all eyes and buttons and mouth, was downstairs, and already in the little parlour, almost before the invitation was out of Mr. Jones's mouth.

When Will entered the room, which had unfortunately the disagreeable drawback of smelling somewhat of the faint odour which pervaded the shop—the odour of dirty, mixed chandlery and grocery, to wit—he found the little sleek-faced pastor sitting demurely at a most luxuriously spread tea-table, with his hands already clasped and resting upon the table, as though he were only waiting to say grace. Opposite to him was a tall, middle-aged lady, with a very thin waist and very bony cheeks, who wore a very wonderful head-dress, composed of white dingle-dangles and satin flowers, and who sat very upright in her chair, lifting her nose and casting her eyes down, as though she were smelling the tea-table, and was doubtful whether it was quite fresh. This lady greeted Mr. Sparks with a very solemn and demure bow, but Will would insist upon shaking her by the hand in the most friendly and familiar manner in the world.

"How d'ye do, ma'am?" said he, politely; "and how do you do, pastor?" he added, turning to that sleek little gentleman, and giving him a vice-like grip.

The attention of Mr. Sparks had hitherto been occupied with the spread upon the table, and in contemplating with mingled curiosity and wonder the tall prim lady in the dingle-dangles, who was now introduced to him as Mr. Tinglebottom's wife; but all at once, upon the entrance of his hostess, his regards became immediately fixed upon her, with an intentness which plainly caused that lady some embarrassment, and the prim Mrs. Tinglebottom to inquire very kindly if he didn't feel quite well. This observation

recalled Will to himself: for the cause of his sudden perturbation was, in short, that upon the bosom of Mrs. Jones was a gold miniature brooch, which he instantaneously recognised as that of which he was so anxiously in search.

"Dash my buttons!" he muttered, scarcely able to conceal his delight. "I didn't fancy Matilda was so jolly soft as to hang out her true colours quite so plainly."

Finding, however, that his conduct would attract attention, and being far too astute a strategist to suffer his policy to be penetrated unduly by the enemy, Mr. Sparks instantly diverted his regards to other objects, contriving deftly to pay a variety of personal compliments to Mrs. Tinglebottom, which worked such a visible effect upon that lady that her dingle-dangles positively danced, and fluttered with agitation—managing, at the same time, to pay the most respectful attention both to Mrs. Jones and the pastor himself.

After a very long grace, the termination of which Will certainly deemed the best part of it, the company fell to upon the shrimps, watercresses, currant cake, and jam, all of which, it must be allowed, the hostess had most munificently provided. As soon, however, as tea was finished, and the reverend Zacharias had wiped his plump little lips with his spotless white handkerchief, in a manner which seemed to imply consciousness of having done *their* duty, and that for their part—unlike *Oliver Twist*—they wanted no more; and as soon as another very long grace had been said over the remnants of the feast, and the meal had been cleared away,—then, indeed, the real moral part of the evening's business began.

Mr. Tinglebottom did not, however, begin the attack by immediately and directly laying siege to Will. On the contrary, having given a gentle preparatory cough, he began in a very mild and soothing tone to relate how, as he was walking one day along the streets, he saw a little boy—a dirty, ragged little boy he was—(and here the pastor glanced sideways at Master Bob); and the dirty, ragged little boy was sitting on a doorstep, and weeping piteously, and he (the pastor) went up to him, and placing his hand upon the child's head, said, "Well, my little man, what ails thee?" Whereupon the little man had informed him that his father was a drunkard, and had given him nothing to eat for two whole days and nights, and—

"Dash my buttons, pastor, but I wish you'd give me one or two of them there tracts, if they'll make my boy do without his grub for two days!" ejaculated Will, at the end of the narrative.

The stately Mrs. Tinglebottom thereupon instantly pulled forth a bundle from her pocket, and handed some to him, saying that he could find therein that which was better for him than the carnal food of this life.

Will thanked her politely, and immediately fell to upon them, reading them (bottom-upwards) apparently with excessive satisfaction and delight. The pastor was about to deliver a thrilling philippic against all those who were wickedly opposed to Tinglebottomianism, when his lady, placing her finger upon her thin lips, enjoining silence, whispered that it would be well to let the said tracts produce their effect upon Will's stubborn heart the first thing. Whilst Mr. Sparks was thus apparently reading with such interest the documents which had been bestowed upon him for his enlightenment (but was, in reality, forming various vague schemes for the procurement of the miniature brooch which glittered so temptingly upon the bosom of his landlady), the company remained in a solemn and dismal silence.

Mr. Will Sparks placed the pamphlet he had been staring at upon the table, laid his fist emphatically upon the pamphlet, and blew his nose with an unexpected violence that startled everybody.

"Well, my friend, are you convinced?" said the minister, turning upon him with the grim smile of a man who knows he cannot be got over by anybody.

Mr. Sparks replied, humbly, and turning up his eyes to a certain blotch upon the ceiling, that he *was* convinced, but added that, "if-so-be the pastor didn't mind, he should like to ask him one or two questions which had for a long time so troubled and vexed him as to occasion him much uneasiness in his inside, and which, he dare say, the pastor, by his superior knowledge in things casuistical, might resolve for him."

The little pastor expressed his great anxiety to dissipate all doubts which his proselyte might entertain, and Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Tinglebottom whispered their mutual edification at hearing "the hungry soul fed with the bread which flowed like an avalanche from such a sagacious fountain of knowledge."

"Now, look here, pastor," said Mr. Sparks, respectfully, "what is your candid opinion, as between man and man—you understand—"

"My friend, I *do* understand," the parson assented, oilily.

"Of witches?" added Mr. Sparks.

The question was vague certainly, and it is probable that even Mr. Tinglebottom found it no easy matter to determine how he should direct his discourse. The consequence was that the answer was as vague as the question. Witches once existed, beyond doubt; and so they did now, in the opinion of some minds; whilst in others they didn't; they were actuated, most probably, by the evil spirit, or perhaps by a good one; but he (Mr. Tinglebottom) would, for his part, strenuously avoid them."

The ladies listened with admiration, Obadiah with sleepy wonder, and Bob, who seemed rather frightened, crept stealthily into a position of security between his father's knees.

"Because," said Will, insinuatingly, "it was a kind of a witch which brought me round to a sense of my misconduct last night."

"Indeed, my friend!" cried Zacharias, deeply interested, and drawing his chair closer in; and the ladies, and even Obadiah, repeated the interjection.

"He did it by working a sort of—of a spell upon me," continued Mr. Sparks, fixing his eyes stedfastly upon the ceiling.

"What did he do, my friend—what did he do?"

"Well," said Will, after reflection, "he began by a little conjuring."

"Conjuring!" repeated his anxious auditors, in a breath.

"A sort of mesmerising of me," pursued Will, growing quite enthusiastic over the tremendous fiction he was inventing. "And when I was all done over, you know, lor', bless your heart, my dear pastor, I felt quite a different sort of man!"

"Bless me! how did you feel?" cried that gentleman, actually sitting upon the edge of his stool, and gaping with astonishment and curiosity.

"Why, sir, I felt all-overish, you know," returned Will.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Obadiah, his fat cheeks, as he sat in the corner, losing their wonted colour.

"I can quite believe this, for I have known such things before," observed the pastor, shaking his head with the air of a sage, but not seeming quite at his ease; for that little gentleman was prone to the supernatural, and Tinglebottomianism, indeed, was intimately associated with many and various mysterious rites.

"How very extraordinary!" added his wife, the dingle-dangles from her head vibrating with emotion.

"But how did he do it? and what was he like, Mr. Sparks?" demanded the ladies, in concert.

"There, ma'am, you have me; I don't exactly know how he did it, but he was a regular witch to look at, and I heard him mutter something, ladies, and so I watched him very closely——"

"*Him!*" exclaimed the pastor, drawing back. "I thought you said it was a *witch*?"

"So it *was* a witch!" retorted Will, with severity; "a *male* witch, of course!"

"Oh!"

"A male witch, of course!" repeated Mr. Sparks, in the same stern tone; "a sort of husband, you know."

"How wonderful!" cried Mrs. Jones. "And you were saying, Mr. Sparks, that you watched him very closely."

"Yes, ma'am; so I did; and after practising a little bit upstairs, I found I could do some of his pranks and tricks; and if you like, ma'am, and the rest of the company, I don't mind giving you a wrinkle or two."

"Work the man-witch's spells!" ejaculated Mrs. Tinglebottom in horror.

Mrs. Jones had, however, her curiosity excited, and the pastor allayed the horror of his wife by whispering his conviction that Will was possessed of an evil spirit himself; and that, when the same had more fully manifested itself, he would exert his apostolic power of casting out devils, to the great glory of Tinglebottomianism.

Having thus received permission to proceed, Mr. Sparks requested the company to form a circle round him. He then desired to borrow two pocket-handkerchiefs and a hat; the latter of which Mr. Tinglebottom supplied him with.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," said Will, assuming the oracular tone of a mountebank, "this here witch that I speak of placed one of the handkerchiefs upon the floor, just like this; and then, holding the hat in his hand like I do, he borrowed a brooch from one of the ladies in the company——"

"Dear me! then there were ladies in the company?" said Mrs. Jones.

"In course there were, ma'am," replied Mr. Sparks, politely. "Will one of you ladies be good enough to lend me *yours*? Thank you! Now I come to think of it, it *was* a brooch very much like this," he added, as he received the miniature from Mrs. Jones; "and then, ladies and gentlemen, he placed the brooch in the pocket-handkerchief—like so, ma'am; and then he placed the other pocket-handkerchief over *the other* pocket-handkerchief—so; and then he placed the hat over the pocket-handkerchief which covered the *other* pocket-handkerchief—like so; and when, ladies and gentlemen, he had muttered a few words (which is, of course, a secret), and lifted up the hat and the handkerchief, lo and behold, *the brooch was gone!*" Suiting the action to the word, *the brooch was gone indeed*, as Mr. Sparks had said!

"Dear me!" ejaculated the pastor's wife.

"Wonderful!" cried Mrs. Jones.

"Yea, verily, I say unto you," began the pastor, rising to cast out the evil spirit which had worked this marvel before his very eyes.

"Wait a moment, brother!" almost screamed Mrs. Jones; "let him bring back my brooch, if you please, before you begin. I suppose, Mr. Sparks, the witch brought back the brooch that——"

"Yes, ma'am, he did certainly," returned Will, with stolid gravity.

"How did he do *that*, Mr. Sparks?"

"Temporise not with evil, Sister Jones," said the pastor, who was eager to show his powers.

"How did he do it, ma'am?" repeated Will, shaking his head

with a sweet smile. "He puzzled me *there*; I wish I knew *how* he did it; but I *don't*."

"You don't mean to say, Mr. Sparks, you are not going to give me back that brooch?" cried Mrs. Jones, rising into a state of exasperation.

"I give it you back, ma'am!" returned Will, turning upon her a look of injured innocence. "I wish I could, ma'am!—I only wish I knew how! You know, ma'am, you asked me to show you how that there witch did with the other brooch, and now, ma'am, you're finding fault—well, I never did!"

"You wretch!—oh! you wicked man!"

"Listen to her, pastor!—do listen to her!" returned Will, holding out his hands in deprecation. "Do reason with her, pastor! You know I only did——"

"Yea, verily, it is an evil spirit!" roared the pastor, looking rather frightened. "And I say unto it—Come forth out of this man——"

"Draw it mild, pastor, you know," interposed Will, insinuatingly, "or it will come forth out of this man, and no mistake. And look you here, ma'am," he added, turning to his victimised landlady, "I fancy you lost that brooch, ma'am, to much the same sort of evil spirit as gave it you, ma'am; and so you've got no reason to call names; and I beg leave to remark, ma'am, that my self-respect won't suffer me to be insulted, ma'am; and so, ladies and gentlemen, I wish you all a very good evening."

Saying which, he quitted the room, closely followed by his faithful son, Bob, and chuckling at the successful *ruse* which had given him possession of the much-coveted miniature brooch.

"Why, dad," cried Bob, in ecstasies, when they reached their own room, "that was the brooch with the man's face!"

"Lor'! you don't say so, Bob!" returned the parent, as if in surprise.

"It was, though," said Bob.

"So it was, Bob," replied Will, in excessive good-humour, and producing the said brooch before Bob's astonished eyes. "Look you here, youngster!—you shall have the treat I promised you; but, dash my buttons! it shan't be to go with the Band of Hope, though."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE THREE GRACES.

"WHERE has Sir Walter gone?" cried Mrs. Evelyn, turning round from the contemplation of the beautiful sunset in much surprise at discovering Sir Walter Lee was no longer with them.

"He was in the room a minute ago," added Mrs. Barber, equally surprised.

"Did you not see him go out?" replied Grace.

Both ladies protested they had not.

"I saw him, at all events," laughed Grace. "He is not very poetical, and left the room while we were admiring the sunset."

"Let us try if we can find him."

No objection being raised to this proposal, the three ladies quickly arrayed themselves in their bonnets, and having learned from the old gardener, who was at work amongst his cherished dahlias, that Sir Walter had passed through the garden into the park about five minutes before, they followed the direction which the old man indicated as the one his master had taken.

Mrs. Evelyn could not refrain from admiring the various flowers which grew about that garden, scattering their perfumes upon the soft evening air.

"I hope and trust, my dear," she said to her daughter, "that your present good fortune and position will not puff you up and make you proud and vain. You must remember, my dear, that these things are all vanity, and snares, and pitfalls, as your father says. I was once interested, my dear Mrs. Barber, in a young man, before I was engaged to Mr. Evelyn, my dear (here Mrs. Evelyn very pathetically sighed), and a very worthy and good young man he was."

"Was it the same one, mamma, who was eaten by those horrid cannibals?" interrupted Grace, good-humouredly.

"The same, my dear; at least his head was preserved, and christianly buried, poor young man! But dear me, Grace, isn't that Sir Walter yonder talking to that man?"

"To be sure it is," responded Mrs. Barber; "but who is the man?"

"One of the servants, I presume," said Lady Lee.

While she was yet speaking, the person with whom Sir Walter Lee had been conversing disappeared amidst the clump of elm-trees among which Lady Lee had declared the shadow she had seen on the former evening had also vanished.

"He is a very gaunt and forbidding sort of a person at all events. He looks a veritable scarecrow, and I should think your husband must not be sorry to part from his company."

Grace laughed.

"So I should think," she replied.

They had now drawn near to where the baronet was standing. His back had been towards them, for he had continued to gaze, as if irresolute, after the retreating form of the man who had just disappeared in the thicket. Apparently the distant voices of the ladies startled him. He sprang sharply round, and perceiving them approaching, he hastened forward to meet them.

"Well, ladies," said he, "I thought you were the three graces stealing upon me in my solitary retreat."

"Nay, sir, but the three goddesses, if you please, who have come to seek you, bringing the golden apple," retorted the sprightly Mrs. Barber.

"You require me, O gentle Juno, to make my election?" said Lee, smiling.

"We fear, most noble Paris, it is too late in the day to require such a thing at your hands. We know your partiality. Fortunately, however, Minerva and Juno will not in this case be jealous, since they already anticipate your choice; which is ——"

"Venus, of course," answered Lee, smiling tenderly on his blushing wife.

"I don't know anything about *three* graces, Sir Walter," observed Mrs. Evelyn, who did not at all perceive the little joke, and who was so badly grounded in the heathen mythology that she very likely thought being addressed as Minerva was not quite respectful; "but I can tell you our dear Grace here was so anxious, when she found you had given us the slip, that we all consented ——"

"Just to appease her," interposed Mrs. Barber, with good humoured malice.

"—— to come and help the poor thing look after you."

"Oh, mamma, how can you say such silly things?" exclaimed Lady Lee, covered with pretty blushes and confusion.

"And lo! and behold," added Mrs. Barber, "when we arrived at the foot of Mount Ida, we discover the faithless Paris holding revel with—surely, Sir Walter, that gaunt-looking animal could not by any possibility be the fair and lovely Helen in disguise!"

"To whom does Mrs. Barber apply that uncomplimentary description, may an unsophisticated shepherd venture to ask?"

"To whom? Oh, fickle one; hast thou, then, more than one?"

Sir Walter Lee gave a wan and sickly smile, and glanced uneasily from one to the other, as though he were silently trying to penetrate to the very innermost recesses of their thoughts.

"She means the tall ugly-looking man, Sir Walter, who just left you as we came up," Mrs. Evelyn informed him, with a smile of the purest innocence. Indeed, how was *she* to know, poor soul!

The baronet shrugged his shoulders, with a grimace.

"He was only some poor devil who used to be employed upon the estate, but who went abroad thinking to better his position, I believe."

"I think I can remember his face now," said Lady Lee.

"Nothing more probable, my darling Venus; he dwelt on this estate for years."

"Is not his name Shaw?"

"Don't dispel my romantic illusion that his name is Helen—Helen of Troy, I beseech you!" cried Mrs. Barber, clasping her hands.

The young man elevated his eyebrows, as if in careless surprise.

"If you indulge in that illusion, I fear I must," said he. "His name is Shaw."

A faint recollection of something she had heard sometime somewhere seemed just then to come into the mind of Mrs. Evelyn.

"Dear me," said she, hesitating, and tapping her forehead, as if to collect her thoughts, "what was there about that man Shaw?"

"The fellow did not bear a very good character in the neighbourhood, I believe, though my uncle continued him in his service," observed Lee, breathing heavily.

"Neither did some of his connections, if I recollect rightly," added Mrs. Barber, quickly.

"No, no; I am aware that—that, in short, it is as you say."

"I never knew much about them, for I do not trouble myself, Sir Walter, with the affairs of other people; at least, of those who hold a position so very much below my own."

"A very prudent and well-considered saving clause, for which, my dear Mrs. Barber, I give you full credit; scandal——"

"Mention not the dreadful word, Sir Walter!" cried the lady, laughing.

Sir Walter smiled.

"Friendly comment about our neighbours, then."

"That is much better, sir."

"Has as small satisfaction in hunting an inferior, compared with that of an equal and a friend, as the triumph over a wounded cat is in comparison with that of a vanquished lion."

Lee spoke with a jaunty, playful air. It was plain he was anxious to turn the subject of discussion into another channel. He was successful so far, that the little interruption he had thus given to the flow of talk caused the versatile mind of Mrs. Evelyn to forget all about what she had been speaking of a moment before. The mentioning of the word "lion" recalled to her recollection an account she had been reading in the newspapers of a certain lion-tamer who had had his head bitten off while exhibiting his perilous performance, and the good lady forthwith diverged into strong expressions of abhorrence of such morbid spectacles, and this latter train of ideas not unnaturally brought her back again to the unlucky young missionary who had once upon a time, during her pre-Evelyn career, paid her so much attention and so forth, a full account of which she related in an unabridged form to Sir Walter and the ladies, in case, perhaps, the latter might have forgotten they had been so favoured about ten minutes before.

Mrs. Barber was too prudent and well-bred a woman to say anything further upon a subject which she perceived her host was anxious to avoid. Grace only was silent during the remainder of the evening.

Having rambled about the grounds for an hour or so, they returned to the house, where the Rector was awaiting their return to escort his wife and Mrs. Barber homewards.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE OPAL RING.

MR. GEORGE WETHERBY was sitting in his chambers at Fig-tree-court. The curious and quaint-looking opal ring, which he believed once to have belonged to poor Emma Evelyn, was glittering upon his finger, and though the hour was by no means early, Mr. Wetherby was loitering lazily over his breakfast, glancing occasionally at an opened letter which he held in his hand. As for the letter he was reading, since the reader is let into a great many secrets connected with this story, he may as well have this one also, more especially as it was not a very profound one, being simply as follows:—

“Rectory, Waverney.

“MY DEAR GEORGE,—Grace and Sir Walter have returned from their tour. They have only been back two or three days, and are both quite well, and are—of course—perfectly blissful. Your aunt is over at Waverney Court this afternoon to see them and to take tea. I shall not be able to get there before the evening. She makes arrangements for them to come over to our place to-morrow. We shall be very pleased to see you, if you can run down. Your usual bed, my dear boy, is always ready for you, and perfectly well-aired, as you may trust your aunt.

“Yours affectionately,

“ANDREW EVELYN.”

“To G. Wetherby, Esq., Temple.”

“To-morrow,” repeated Mr. Wetherby, “that is, of course, to-day. *Tempus fugit*. And so my Lady Lee has got satisfactorily through her honeymoon. I wonder if I shall ever have a honeymoon—heigho! I wonder whether—whether Flora Phillips will be there or not? If I thought so, 'gad, I'd go. By Jove, I will go at all events. I should like to see little Gracie.”

Mr. George Wetherby, indeed, had been in the habit lately of often “running down” to Waverney. Sometimes, to speak the plain truth, he would, upon such occasions, take a walk over to Mr. Phillips's, having exerted his utmost ingenuity in the first instance to find a reasonable excuse to get in there, and (where he was, no

doubt, very well treated, and where, I daresay, he enjoyed himself to his heart's content.

In accordance with the resolution he had come to, Mr. Wetherby quickly despatched the remainder of his breakfast, and dressed himself with scrupulous care and attention. Having at length satisfied himself in every particular of his dress, he put on his hat and sallied forth, and the same afternoon found himself safely ensconced in the easy chair which custom had now devoted to him in the snug little parlour of the Rectory, long before anybody else had arrived.

Mr. Wetherby had not, however, been long thus seated when he contrived, by means of a series of round-about questions, to come to the knowledge that Miss Flora Phillips *was* to be a guest that afternoon.

"Oh, dear, yes; Miss Flora is coming, *of course*; we wouldn't forget *her* on any account," Mrs. Evelyn had replied. And the good matron had thereupon pursed up her round little mouth so knowingly, and had given George Wetherby such a provoking and sly smile, as caused that gentleman considerable vexation, annoyance, and uneasiness. Nevertheless, he was not displeased to hear that Miss Flora Phillips had been invited that afternoon, and had also accepted the invitation. Poor young man! he thought neither his aunt nor uncle perceived his exultation, and that he had quite concealed his anxiety.

To cut a long matter short—Miss Flora came; and very pretty she looked—that certainly must be confessed; and very brightly, too, did her dark eyes sparkle when they alighted upon the eager face of George Wetherby. La! how surprised that young lady was to see Mr. Wetherby there, though Mrs. Evelyn had told her he was coming; but that is nothing at all. Was he quite well? What changeable weather! wasn't it? but very seasonable—and so forth. To which Mrs. Evelyn, looking all good-nature and pink cap-ribbons, had answered, "That is right, my dear; run upstairs and take your bonnet off; you know the way; Grace's room, my dear." And Miss Flora had run upstairs accordingly; and my Lady Lee, coming in also at the same juncture, had run upstairs likewise.

Whilst the young ladies were amusing and instructing themselves upstairs, and whilst Mr. George Wetherby was wishing from his heart they would come downstairs, and wondering what on earth was keeping them up there such an interminable time, that gentleman was endeavouring, as well as his distracted attention would permit, to assist the Rector in a desultory sort of a conversation with Sir Walter Lee.

"Travelling has its pleasures and the Rhine its beauties," Sir

Walter says, as he puffs his cigar with much *bonhomie*. "But for my part, gentlemen, I long to get back to the peace and quiet loveliness of my own modest home in my own dear native land."

Mr. Wetherby shrugs his shoulders, and stares with a most melancholy smile at the smoke curling lazily in spiral columns from his cigar.

"It is all very fine for you Benedicts to chatter about the 'peace and quiet loveliness of your homes,'" says he; "but for my part, having no such gentle attractions to bind me to my dear 'native land,' I confess I'd willingly take a year or two in travelling."

"Why the deuce, then," said Lee, "don't you get some such gentle attractions?"

"Haven't got the courage to make the plunge, I suppose."

"The courage!" laughs Sir Walter; "psha! it's very easy. Besides, old fellow, it's quite time now you settled down."

"That is just what I tell him, Sir Walter," Mrs. Evelyn exclaims.

"Who the deuce would have such a scapegrace as I?" says George. But his thoughts are still upstairs, and at the same moment he heard my lady saying something, and addressing somebody as "Flora, dear."

"Very modest all at once," rejoins Lee.

"Who *wouldn't*, my dear, if you'd only ask 'em?" adds his beaming aunt. "So many young girls looking out for husbands, my dear, as there are——"

"So many, my dear!" chuckles the Rector, giving Master George a look which caused that gentleman to wince. "If the young man thinks about it at all, my dear, he must, of course, content himself with *one*."

"One would be quite enough for me, I daresay," answers Wetherby, smiling.

"Come, come; that is an improvement in the prospect of his case, at all events," Lee exclaims, chaffingly.

Soon after this, however, and when the young ladies had come downstairs, and were chatting away according to the wont of young ladies in general, Mr. Wetherby began humming the words—

"Oh name the day, the wedding-day,
And I will buy the ring."

Which words turning his attention into a natural train of ideas, caused him to glance at the opal ring he was still wearing upon his finger. Now, whether in thus glancing at the said ring he attracted the attention of Sir Walter Lee, who was just then standing at the window beside him; or whether the ring, which, as has been before observed, was sufficiently curious to attract attention itself, had so diverted him, I cannot presume to determine.

Certain, however, it is, that Sir Walter stopped short suddenly, in some light playful badinage with which he was teasing poor George, and caught hold of the latter gentleman's hand.

"That is a curious old ring you have there, Wetherby," he exclaimed, with an interest which did not fail to strike the other.

"Ah! do you think so?" he returned, carelessly.

"I do indeed."

"It is rather a quaint affair, certainly," said George.

"May I inquire if you have had it long?"

"Not long," replied Wetherby, regarding the young baronet fixedly, but affecting to be examining the ring with the supercilious air of a connoisseur. "A few days merely. I hardly know its real value, in fact; but I would not willingly part with it."

He took it from his finger and handed it to Lee, who inspected its workmanship with an eagerness which did not escape George.

"Did you *buy* this ring?" he demanded abruptly, at length.

"Buy it? No—at least, not exactly," replied the young lawyer, startled by the suddenness with which the question was put.

"You say not exactly, *mon ami*?"

"No; but something very like it, though."

"Excuse me——"

"I procured it by an outlay of money."

"The deuce! You did not *buy* it; but you procured it by an outlay of money—a distinction without a difference, my good sir; unless, indeed, you may have paid somebody to *steal* it."

"I will explain the paradox," said he.

"My faith! it needs explanation," muttered Lee, still staring at the ring.

"Briefly, then, it was pawned by a friend of mine, who died. I procured the duplicate, redeemed the ring, and wear it as a *memento mori*."

"Oh, indeed," said Lee, handing it back to him with an air of indifference, which puzzled Wetherby greatly, to determine whether it were affected or real. He was inclined to think the former.

"The name of my friend was Langton—William Langton."

George watched the other's face narrowly as he spoke the name.

"Langton!"

"Yes; William Langton was the name."

"Well, it is certainly a very curious and remarkable ring, to whomsoever it belong," rejoined Sir Walter Lee. And he was then turning away from the window, when Wetherby caught him by the coat-sleeve.

"Do you *know* any person of such a name?"

"I! Upon my conscience, no!" replied Lee, laughing. "What on earth made you suppose I should know him?"

"I thought it possible, inasmuch as you seemed to recognise the ring," hazarded the young man, looking at the other searchingly.

Lee again laughed carelessly, and shrugged his shoulders.

"*Mon ami*," said he, "you jump to conclusions. I did not recognise the ring. I merely admired it, and thought it curious. I thought, also; I had seen one before something like it; but the explanation you have as to the manner in which it came into your possession forbids the possibility of its being the same. That is all."

At this moment Lady Lee came up to where they were standing, and said something pleasant to them both. She seemed pale in the face that afternoon, and less cheerful than was her wont.

"My Gracie does not seem in good spirits to-day," Sir Walter said, as he took her hand. "I have noticed it all day, and have been going to speak of it. Has my little wife anything to annoy her?"

My lady very strenuously denied that she *had* anything to annoy her, and she laughed—a forced, unnatural laugh, though, it seemed, coming from her who was generally so frank and open; and her pretty soft eyes, which were wont to look so candidly and trustfully into her husband's, now avoided his as though she was fearful he should read something in them which would tell him she was concealing her thoughts from him. Mr. Wetherby, however, came to help her out of her difficulty.

"There is something oppressive in the weather," said he. "I don't feel in particularly good spirits this afternoon myself."

"You do not seem *especially* cheerful, Mr. Wetherby, I must confess," exclaimed a very pleasant and musical voice at his elbow, which sent the blood gushing in a torrent into that gentleman's face, and upon turning round, Mr. Wetherby fully expected to see precisely what he did see—the sparkling black eyes, and the laughing face of pretty Miss Flora shining sunnily upon him.

"A man filled with sorrow and remorse is seldom cheerful, Miss Phillips," replied Wetherby, becoming much more cheerful, though, from the first moment that Miss Flora's smiles beamed upon him.

"And why, sir, are you sorrowful?"

"Because he is so unfortunate as to appear dull to so charming a young lady as Miss Flora Phillips; and he is filled with remorse that he has been so remiss in not trying to make himself more pleasant and agreeable to her."

Flora laughed good-humouredly, yet she seemed very well pleased with the compliments bestowed upon her. There was not much wit in his sallies, but she laughed at them, and would have laughed at them had they been as pointless as a cricket-ball.

"I am glad, sir," laughed the fascinating brunette, "that Mr. George Wetherby has not been so vanquished by his melancholy as to have forgotten how to flatter."

"And I am equally so that Miss Flora Phillips has not, for her part, forgotten how to please."

Whilst, however, Mr. Wetherby and the pretty Flora were thus innocently amusing themselves, Sir Walter Lee had quietly drawn the plump arm of my lady through his own, and had led her, nothing loth, into the Rectory garden.

"Do you remember, Grace," he said, "a maxim I gave you the other night, when you told me of that dream of yours?"

"A maxim?"

"Yes, dear; one well worthy to be stoned up in your memory."

"Yet, sir, I am sorry——"

"You have forgotten it? Well, never mind."

"What was it, sir? I will not forget your words of wisdom again."

"Never to have a secret from your husband, my dear girl," said Lee.

Lady Lee's arm trembled for a moment; the next, however, she had mustered up nerve to keep it steady again, and she replied——

"Forgive me, sir, but may I offer you a maxim equally wise?"

"What maxim is that?" said Lee, smiling gravely.

"Never, to have a secret from your wife."

It was now Sir Walter's turn to be confused. He turned away his countenance. He dared not look into that of his pure and truthful wife.

"Few secrets do I keep from you, Grace," he said, at length.

"But you keep *one*."

"Ah!"

"Do not deny it, sir."

"How? Great heaven! my dear girl, tell me what you mean!" ejaculated Sir Walter, in a voice and with a look that startled the beautiful girl by his side. "Tell me, Grace," he added, more calmly, "what secret do I keep from you? I know of none——indeed, I know of none."

"Who—who is that man with whom we saw you talking yesterday evening? Tell me who he is, Walter, and what he wants——tell me what he does here, hovering about our quiet home like a spirit of evil!" Grace cried, with suppressed energy, and her face flushing.

The young man's face looked troubled. His exquisitely-chiselled features looked like marble, so pale and rigid had they become.

"Tell you who he is, Grace, and what he wants?" he repeated, hastily. "Have I not told you already?"

"I wish I could think so, Walter!"

"Do you not, then, believe me, Grace?"

The girl hesitated.

"You have told me a *part*," she said.

"Listen to me, my dear girl," rejoined Lee, calmly. "I told you he was a gamekeeper who had once been upon my estate;—there are many about here who know him as such. I told you his name was Shaw. I told you also that he had been abroad, and that he had now returned again, a beggar, beseeching me, on account of his former services, to give him a little aid. Is this explanation enough? If not, my dear girl, I am afraid I can give you no more."

Grace stood silent.

"Is there anything unreasonable in what I say?" Lee went on.

"No."

"On the contrary, is it not perfectly natural?"

"Yes, perhaps so."

"What, then, on earth, Grace, can make you suppose I am deceiving you?"

"I don't exactly know."

"This is childish, Grace!" cried the young man, stamping his foot, impatiently. "What you mean by his hovering about us I cannot conceive. This, my dear—forgive me! I don't want to be harsh—but this, I repeat, is mere childishness. I gave the poor fellow a ten-pound note yesterday evening—he did not deserve it, for he bore no good character—and thereupon he went away to London, I believe, and promised he would bother me here no more."

"No, no, Walter!" broke out the girl, excitedly, "he did not go away. In this you are mistaken. Last night, happening to look out of the window, I saw his tall, dark form skulking about in the moonlight among the trees. This morning also, as I went from the garden into the park, I saw him again. I thought he leered upon me, threateningly, and I was so terrified I could neither move nor call out. But he quickly got away, as though he were anxious no one should see him, and disappeared in the same thicket where—where the shadow disappeared the other night."

"Ah! say you so?" ejaculated Lee, sternly, and a dark cloud of anger settling ominously upon his brow. "Can it be indeed true that the villain has not kept his word, and departed, as he said he would?"

"He has not, indeed."

"It is very strange."

"I am certain I saw him."

"I do not doubt your word, Grace," said Lee, kissing her.

"I fear, Walter, this man means some harm."

Lee laughed scornfully, and his eyes flashed out a defiant light.

"He means himself some good—that is, more money, Grace, if I will give it him. But that I will not. Rest assured, dear, I will see into this to-morrow. Calm your fears, and let us now return indoors, or they will miss us."

CHAPTER XL.

IN WHICH GEORGE WETHERBY RECEIVES TWO VISITORS.

MR. GEORGE WETHERBY returned to London and to his chambers in Fig-tree-court upon the morning following the events recorded last. This gentleman was more deeply in love with pretty Miss Flora than ever, and not a little perplexed on account of the short dialogue he had had anent the opal ring with Sir Walter Lee.

On the former point, indeed, Mr. Wetherby's fate had been brought to a crisis during a romantic conversation with the young lady, which was naturally evolved out of admiring the beauties of the Rectory garden by moonlight—a light, by the way, which is often fatal to the prudent resolutions of single gentlemen, when the said light happens to fall softly on the upturned faces of pretty maidens, who may be cunning enough to avail themselves of its influence to enjoy a ramble. So far, in fact, had Mr. Wetherby been carried away by the force of circumstances, the moonlight and the bright eyes of Miss Flora, gleaming with all the softened brilliance of two moons, of themselves, upon him, that he had gone so deeply into a florid declaration of his imperishable adoration, almost before he knew what he was saying, that he found he had advanced too far to retreat. So, putting a bold face upon the matter, he thought he might as well (as he afterwards irreverently expressed it) "go the whole hog," and so besought Miss Flora to marry him forthwith. And it was not until that young lady, blushing very deeply, had made some whispered observation, which caused him thereupon to strain her to his breast and kiss her rosy lips a hundred times, that he recollected he was merely a briefless barrister as yet, with only his private income of some two hundred pounds a-year to support a wife and family.

"*N'importe !*" muttered he, with characteristic nonchalance, as he sauntered through the Temple-gate, this after-reflection being just then uppermost in his mind; "if the charming Miss Flora is

willing to become Mrs. George Wetherby and to starve, that's her look out, not mine. But, by Jove, she's a darling girl, anyhow, and I'll be hanged if I'm not glad I mustered up the pluck to act just as I did. A short life and a merry one, say I, after all."

By the time Mr. Wetherby had reached this self-congratulatory point of his soliloquy, he had arrived at the third flight of that house in Fig-tree-court which bore his name on the door-post; had rung the housekeeper's bell, and was patiently standing before the door of his own chambers, placidly contemplating the deaf housekeeper's tabby Tom cat, which was sleeping composedly on the staircase window, with the warm morning's sun playing genially upon him.

"Good morning, sir!" said the deaf housekeeper, coming downstairs from her own lofty attic, with two or three letters in her hand, and dropping a respectful curtsy when she came to the foot.

"Good morning, Mrs. Biffin!" said Wetherby. "These my letters?"

"These are all, sir," said Mrs. Biffin.

"Has there been anybody here since I went away?"

"Yes, sir; a Mr. Sparks and Lieutenant Dent," she answered.

"Lieutenant Dent in England again!" muttered George in surprise. "Did either of them leave any further message, Mrs. Biffin?" Wetherby loudly asked, after a pause.

"Sir?" said the lady, holding her hand to her ear.

Wetherby impatiently repeated the question.

"The old crone at first replied that they had not; then she recollected that the "person with the dog" had left word with her that she was to tell Mr. Wetherby he had succeeded in getting what was wanted, and that he (Mr. Wetherby) should have the same when he came round.

Thanking his deaf companion, he went into his own rooms in order to peruse the letters he had just received, and to await, with feverish anxiety, the arrival of his expected guest.

Scarcely had he become seated when a knock was given at the door.

"Come in!" cried George.

The door opened, and a tall, military-looking man, with his arm in a sling, came in.

"Wetherby!" exclaimed this personage, hastening forward with an expression of pleasure upon his face, and offering his left hand for the other to grasp.

"Dent, old boy! Welcome back to England! Glad, indeed, am I, old friend, to see your face again! But, ah! what is the matter with your arm? Nothing serious, I hope?"

The lieutenant laughed gaily and shrugged his shoulders.

"A trifle merely, *mon ami*; a cannon-ball rolled out of its locker upon me one day and smashed my hand. I was laid up some weeks, and as my health was considerably impaired, I applied for, and obtained, leave of absence for six months to visit dear old England, and recruit my health."

"Your notion, my dear fellow, of a trifle is really charming for its simplicity," replied George smiling. "As, however, it has procured me the pleasure of seeing your old face again, and as, moreover, you do not appear to care very much for your accident yourself, why—in short, I see no particular reason that I should be sorry either."

"We'll bear it the best way we can, old boy, anyhow," said Dent, as if having a broken bone or two were a good joke.

"At any rate, my dear fellow, I bid you hearty welcome once more to England."

The two friends found plenty to talk about and to amuse themselves with, as the reader may be sure, and the hours flew quickly by in the recapitulation of their respective experiences and adventures during the twelvemonths or so which had elapsed since last they met. On two subjects, however, was George Wetherby singularly reticent, viz., in regard to the mysteries which involved the fate of Emma, and which he came somehow to have a vague terror might involve also the fates of Grace and Sir Walter Lee; and secondly, in regard to the late tender episodes which had occurred between himself and Miss Flora. Dent, for his part, seemed most anxiously to avoid talking of Sir Walter Lee and his young wife. He appeared not to be surprised to hear that Grace had become Lady Lee; but as soon as he possibly could, he changed the subject of conversation, as though it were displeasing to him. All at once, however, while the two friends were in the midst of their mutual confessions and confidences, the loud, angry bark of a dog outside startled them. The bark was immediately followed by the dog himself, who came bounding into the room quite friskily, and who—being no other than Charley—was followed in his turn by Mr. Will Sparks.

"Good evenin', sir!" said Will, doffing his fur cap politely; "I hope I see you well, sir, and that you've enjoyed your trip?"

"Thank you, yes," returned George, hastily. "But tell me; did you get—you know what I mean?"

"Ye—es, sir, I *did* get it," responded Will, hesitating, and looking by no means cheerful.

"Ah, that is well!"

"No, sir; I'm afraid it *ain't* quite well," said Will.

"Why, where is it, my friend? Give it to me—quick!" Wetherby exclaimed, stretching out his hand eagerly.

{ "That's just where it is, sir ; I'm sorry I haven't got it to give you."

Wetherby drew back.

"You told me just now you had."

"I told you, sir, that I had succeeded in getting it, and I brought it round here last night, sir. But, dash my buttons, this morning I lost it!"

"Lost it!" ejaculated George, angry and disappointed.

"The long and the short of it is, sir, that a sneaking warmint, as I thought was a friend, stole it of me. But I'll get it again, and pay the beggar off, too!"

How Mr. Sparks came to lose the brooch was as follows:

CHAPTER XLI.

IN WHICH THE BITER GETS BITTEN.

MR. WILL SPARKS, having obtained possession of the miniature brooch from his hypocritical landlady, was not unnaturally much elated thereby, more especially when he mentally contemplated the munificent reward which his patron, Mr. Wetherby, had promised him, if he succeeded in the attempt. With a not unreasonable anxiety to obtain this guerdon, he had taken the very earliest opportunity of carrying the said miniature to Fig-tree-court. Unluckily, he had found (as the reader is aware) that Mr. Wetherby was paying a visit at Waverney—unluckily, because, had Mr. Wetherby been at home on that occasion, the miniature would have been delivered to him, and Will would have received the well-earned recompense for his labours. As it was, being disappointed, and having to pass on his way homewards that same public at the bar of which, the reader will remember, Mr. Sparks had renewed his acquaintance with Tom Shaw, he resolved he would just drop in there again, and luxuriate with a quiet something with the chill off, to keep out the cold evening air. Will settled himself comfortably enough at one of the wooden benches, and having lit his pipe, and indulged in a prolonged draught of the "something with the chill off," which seemed to relieve his despondency considerably, he proceeded to while away his time by carving his initials with his pocket-knife upon the wooden bench aforesaid.

While Will was enjoying this intellectual, albeit, rather destructive pastime, he was suddenly aroused from his reverie by the weight of a heavy hand, which came plump upon his shoulder without warning or ceremony.

"Well done mate, well done!" exclaimed a hoarse voice at his elbow.

Upon looking up Mr. Sparks discovered that it was his quondam acquaintance, Tom Shaw, who was thus admiring his carving operations.

"Hulloa, Tommy! Is that you?" said he.

"Yes, it's me, mate," said Shaw. "How are you?"

"Oh—bobbish; how's yourself, Tommy?"

"About the same," answered Shaw, stretching himself.

"Doing a bit o' sculptoring, eh, mate?"

"Something that way, Tommy."

"What is it—a horse?"

"No, Tommy—it isn't a horse," replied Will, indignantly.

"It's my initials; that's what it is."

Mr. Shaw stroked his straggling red beard, and having lost no time in ordering a plentiful supply of ale from the pert barmaid, he fell to upon the same vigorously, inviting his companion to partake.

"Order what you like, Will; I'll stand it," said he, throwing down a sovereign upon the table with the ostentation of conscious wealth.

"Much obliged to you, Tom, my boy," said Will. "You seem rather flush this afternoon, don't you?"

"Yes; I guess I am rather, just now," said he.

"I wish I was," rejoined Will, desolately.

The gamekeeper made no immediate reply. He lit his pipe and eyed his companion with a curious and sinister expression from under his shaggy brows, in a manner which somehow made the other feel anything but comfortable.

"Dash my whiskers! there's something about that fellow that makes me feel as though he were throwing cold water down my back," he muttered inwardly. And he pulled his coat closely about him as though to baffle that very disagreeable sensation.

"I've just come up from the country," said Shaw, presently.

"Did the old gov'nor that was tip up pretty handsome, then?"

"He tipped tolerable; not so much as he ought to, though. Fifty pounds, sir," said Shaw, winking; "and that isn't so bad to begin with, I guess. I don't think Sir Walter's done well by me, though," said Shaw, after he had been puffing away at his pipe some time in silence. "He's a d——d mean screw, Will; considerin' all I've done for him."

"What have you done for him, Tommy?"

"And all as I know about him, too," added Tom in the tone and manner of an illused man; but not deigning to make any answer to the other's not unnatural question.

"Eh!"

"I say he ain't treated me as I ought to be treated," continued the fellow, puffing his pipe tremendously, and looking surlily at the smoke. "I mean to have some more out of him, though, d— him, before I cut the country, and then I guess I'm off as slick as the wind back agin to Ameriky. So he'd better look out."

"Why; how are you going to get it, Tommy, if he isn't exactly a mind to let you have it?" said Will.

The gamekeeper answered not, but went on smoking in sulkily silence, and presently gave his companion a repetition of the same sinister leer which had once before so much deranged him.

"Well," said the latter, staring at his pipe-bowl, and solemnly contemplating the alternations of redness and blackness of the burning tobacco within the same. "It wouldn't do for all of us to be at war with fortune, would it, Tom?"

Tom Shaw replied that he supposed it wouldn't, and that it was absolutely necessary for some of them "to keep the pot a-bilin'!"

"I've been doing a little bit of detective business in the private and confidential way," said Will, after a pause.

"What have you been detecting, then, mate?" said he.

Mr. Sparks, nothing loth, thereupon entered into a full and elaborate recapitulation of his search for the brooch which he had been commissioned to recover; and dilated, with pardonable vanity and humour, upon the skilful trick he had played Mrs. Jones and the pastor. When he had finished, and when he and his friend had laughed very heartily over all the incidents connected with its recovery, Mr. Sparks pulled out of his pocket a small parcel of tissue paper, which was carefully fastened with a piece of twine, and which being opened proved to contain the brooch itself, and handed this over to the other for his inspection.

"This is the little kickshaw which has caused such a hubbub. A devilish good-looking face that fellow's got; though I'm pretty sure he's as black a scoundrel as ever lived."

Now it happened that the gamekeeper took the miniature with the careless indifference with which he would have taken any other miniature. But he had barely cast his eye upon it when a smothered exclamation, something like a grunt, burst from his lips, and a cunning leering smile overspread his malicious lantern-jawed face.

"That there's worth something, now, I should think," observed Will.

"In course it is," returned Shaw, drily.

"The setting is solid gold."

"Humph!"

"What's the matter, Tommy?"

"Nothin', mate, I was only calculating, you wouldn't buy it, I suppose—under—under five pound."

Shaw continued to stare at the trinket with large twinkling eyes: and he clutched it with the greedy grasp of avarice.

"Do you want to sell it, mate?" said he, speaking with an eagerness which he strove in vain to conceal. "Will you sell it, mate, for five pounds?"

"No."

"But why not, mate?"

"Dash my buttons!" ejaculated Will, "it don't belong to neither you nor me!"

"Hang it, mate, I don't see that. You got it, and she's dead, and I don't see but what you've got as good a right to it as anybody else. D— it, mate; I've taken a fancy to this, somehow. You say you're hard up. Here's a chance for you now, hang me! I tell you what; I'll give you *ten* pound. Come, now; what do you say to ten?"

"I say, Tommy, as I've got no more right to sell it for ten pound than I have for five. I promised to get it for him as were a relative of hers, and who has, no doubt, got some reason to want it. *I'm* not the fellow to do the poor creature who was so kind to my old woman any wrong; and I *won't*—that's flat!"

"So you won't sell it, then?"

"No, I *won't*!" reiterated Will, stoutly.

Nevertheless, Shaw did not seem at all inclined to give it up. He clutched at it as tenaciously as ever; and, in an insinuating tone, besought his companion to name any sum he *would* take for it. At this Will started to his feet, and seized the rogue by the collar of the coat, with a resolute expression, which showed very plainly he was in no mood to be trifled with.

"Now, look you here, Tommy," he growled; "you just hand that there brooch back again to me. I've given you my answer, and I mean to stick to it. It isn't mine, and it isn't yours: and so the sooner you hand him over the better."

Shaw still hesitated a moment, and then changing his manner, burst into a coarse laugh, and gave back to Sparks the object of contention.

"Ha, ha! mate; you're a deep beggar, you are!" he cried, with admiration.

"Am I?" said Will, coolly; "I'm glad to hear it; though I don't know how."

"I see through you, mate. You mean to get more out of that there than ten cooters, and quite right too, mate—and quite right too. I don't blame you for it; not I. I'll be bound to say *Pd* make a good bit more out of it—one way or another."

"I don't know anything about that, Tommy," returned Will, as he wrapped up the brooch in its tissue paper, and put it again into his pocket.

"And, by gum! it was a cunning trick, that was of your's, the way you chisselled the old woman out of it," continued Shaw, rubbing his hands with apparent delight, and still glaring at the other.

While Will was complacently smiling and smoking, his companion was regarding him from under his clumpy eye-brows with that sinister expression of evil with which he had regarded him two or three times during their conversation before.

"You're rather hard up, then, mate?" he said, by-and-bye.

"No mistake of that," responded Will, solemnly.

"Are you inclined for a little quiet job, mate; as may set you up alonger me, if I can put you in the way of it?"

"By all manner of garden-stuff, if it's worth while; and much obliged too."

"Not much doubt about its being worth while," answered Shaw eagerly, and dropping his voice to a low whisper, as he bent over the bench, and brought his lips close to the other's ear.

"That's the sort of job for me, then," said Will. "What is it to do?"

The gamekeeper glanced hastily round the room to make sure that no one could overhear their discourse; and having satisfied himself of this, he took his pipe from his mouth, and laid it carefully upon the table.

"Look you here, mate," he whispered; "this here is a little job as I meant to have managed my own self, but there are difficulties in the way, so that I find I must have at least one chap to help me. Now, you're a cutish sort of a warmint, Will——"

"Thank you, Tommy," interrupted Mr. Sparks, smoking placidly.

"In some things, mate, two heads are better than one, and this here is one of 'em. You're hard up, mate; but I can put you all right agin. If you're a mind to fall in alonger me, I can show you how to fill your peckets."

"Then I hope you won't let any impediment stand in the way of friendship, Tommy."

"I should guess, mate, there might be a hundred or so to be got, anyhow," answered Shaw, pausing to note the effect of his words.

Mr. Sparks whistled his wonder and astonishment, and begged the other would be good enough to inform him as quickly as possible what he was expected to do.

"Oh, there sint much to do, mate," replied the other; "and

what there is to do is as easy as apple-pie. Any objection to go over to Ameriky alonger me, mate? What do you say to that, now?"

Will said he didn't particularly care about it, but that, however, he wouldn't stand nice if anything, especially in his line of business, was to be picked up on the other side of Jordan.

"Ah, well, that's no consequence," pursued Shaw, briskly. Only I was thinking, mate, if you didn't mind, it would be all the better."

"But why on earth, Tommy, don't you say what it is?" exclaimed Will, stamping his foot with impatience.

"Well, then, so I will," replied Shaw, bending forward until his hot unpleasant breath fanned the other's cheek. "You know I went down to my old crib at Waverney, where I used to be afore I went to Ameriky for many, many year."

"Go on; you've told me that already."

"When I was down there I saw young Sir Walter, and he didn't behave well to me, mate. I'm in one or two of his little secrets that he wouldn't care everybody should get light of, and I've never split, I havn't. Yet for all that, Will, he only gave me a paltry fifty pounds; he knocked me down, he did. What would you do, mate, to sich a chap as that?"

"I wouldn't have much to do with him at all, if he served me like that, Tommy; except for the sake of the fifty pounds," rejoined Sparks, drily.

"I swore I wouldn't forget it, Will; and I'll make it up to him yet."

"I don't blame you, Tommy; but how?"

"In the Court," he went on, in a hoarse, significant whisper, "there are plenty of things that are worth no end of money. I know where the plate-chest is kept. I know how to get at it. I *will* get in, and perhaps this very night."

"But supposing you do know how to get in, Tommy, are you quite certain you know how to *get out again*?"

"Easily as pap."

"That's all right, then—because that's a great consideration."

"Join with me, mate," pursued the tempter: "whatever we get we'll share and share alike. What do you say, eh?"

Poor Will was so amazed at the turn things had taken that for some time, he could say nothing at all.

"Is that the way you propose I should earn my hundred pounds?" he demanded, as soon as he had recovered breath.

"Yes, mate; what do you say to it? Come, now, what do you say?"

"Only this, Tommy, that I'd much rather be excused. Depend

upon it, it'll turn out bad. Make the most of what you have, and don't get playing with the devil. I'm off home; so good-night to you!"

Saying which, Mr. Sparks rose from his seat, whistled to Charley, buttoned his coat, and was turning away.

"Heigh!" cried Shaw, seizing him by the arm. "Think it over, mate. Perhaps that lawyer friend of yours won't stump up, and you may change your mind. Anyhow I won't do anything, mate, till to-morrow; and look ye here—if you do—you'll find me hanging out here."

With which he handed him an old envelope, upon which was written his name and address.

"No fear of that, Tommy, replied Will, taking the paper, however. "This doesn't lay in my line of business. Come, Charley. So good night, mate.

"Good-night, mate!"

"What a consummate scoundrel!" muttered Sparks, as he wended his way homewards.

All at once he thought of the brooch, and feeling in his pocket to ascertain that it was safe, he found that it was gone.

CHAPTER XLII.

PLOT AGAINST PLOT.

It was a brief *resumé* of the last chapter which Mr. Will Sparks related to George Wetherby and Lieutenant Dent, in order to account for the untoward circumstance of his having obtained possession of the miniature brooch, and then losing it again.

"You suspect, then, that your unscrupulous acquaintance, who, you say, was once a gamekeeper at Waverney Court, has stolen the brooch from you?"

"Suspect it! I more than suspect it," replied Will. "I hadn't got away five minutes when I first missed it. I turned back directly with the intention of accusing the confounded rascal of the theft, but when I got back to the place where I had left him, I found he had bolted."

"But you had his address, had you not?" said George.

"So I had, sir; and I went round this morning to where it was—out Rotherhithe way, it was—and there I saw him, sure enough——"

"And you taxed him with stealing it, point blank, I presume?"

"Aye, that I did, sir, and no mistake; but of course he swore might and main that he hadn't seen the blessed thing since he gave it back to me and I had put it in my pocket. I didn't believe him, but what could I do?"

"By Jove!" said Wetherby, "I am more anxious to get hold

of this brooch than ever I was! Do you think the fellow recognised it?"

"Either the brooch, sir, or the portrait in it, most decidedly I do."

"That is a very curious circumstance, upon my word!"

Mr. Wetherby, thinking that all this strange dialogue must appear very mysterious to the lieutenant, proceeded to inform that gentleman of the seduction of Emma Evelyn (with which, however, Dent appeared already acquainted), and of his reasons for wishing to recover the miniature portrait, demanding of him his friendly advice as to what was the best thing to be done.

Dent listened with rapt attention to this narration.

"However you may determine about the brooch," said he, quietly, "if this fellow contemplates a burglary at Waverney Court, ought you not to contrive somehow to put Lee upon his guard?"

"I'll run down again to Waverney myself," cried George, after a moment's consideration, during which it occurred to him that by so doing he would have an unexpected opportunity of beholding his beloved Flora. "Will you come with me?"

"Thank you," replied Dent, with a shudder. "No."

"Why not?" demanded Wetherby.

Dent made no rejoinder, but paced the room.

"You *must* come!" George cried, energetically. "I can't part with you, old fellow, the same day I've found you; besides, I want to introduce you to a certain party, my friend, whom I think you will like, and of whom I want to have your confidential opinion."

The lieutenant smiled grimly at this, but still did not immediately reply.

"Excuse me, sir," said Will, who had been standing all this time in silence. "I should like to have a finger in this pie, if you've no objection; and it shall go hard with me if I don't contrive to pay off that beggar for serving me as he did."

"Very good, my friend; but what do you propose, then, to do?"

"Why, sir, if you've no objection, as the fellow's such a blessed sneak as to get robbing his old master, who has just been giving him money, and as to turn against him as was talking to him in a friendly way, and steal things from him,—I'll be hanged, sir, if it don't seem quite right and deserving that he should be served out in a way, as I may say, sir, *similarly*; and if you've no objection, sir, to my so doing, and will bear me harmless with Sir Walter Lee, I'll go back to Shaw and pretend to fall into his views, and will let you know of his movements, so that you and Sir Walter can be ready and prepared for the attack when it comes."

"A very good idea!" Wetherby cried with enthusiasm. "By Jove, Dent, this will turn out amusing as well as useful!"

It being therefore thus arranged that Wetherby and Dent should proceed to Waverney at once, and that Mr. Sparks should without delay seek out Shaw and endeavour to ferret out the secrets of his movements, and certain instructions for Will's guidance being given to him, so that a communication might be kept up between them, George Wetherby placed a couple of sovereigns in Will's hand, not as a reward for his trouble, which he assured him should not be overlooked, but to enable him to defray any expenses of the expedition, and to carry out the scheme, if possible, to a successful issue.

With a thousand thanks and assurances of fidelity, Will replaced his fur cap upon his head, and was about to quit the room, when suddenly turning round again, he whipped off the cap again, and stood before them.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said he. "There is one little thing I noticed about that there brooch which I meant to tell you, sir, as I thought it might be of importance, or, at least, some guide to you."

"What is it?" cried George, eagerly.

"At the back of it, sir, there were some letters engraved in a scroll, you know."

"Initials?"

"Yes, sir, leastways I suppose so."

"And those initials were——"

"*W. L.*, sir," replied Sparks, after a moment's recollection. "Yes, sir, I think that was it—*W. L.*"

"I expected as much," muttered George Wetherby, between his teeth.

"*What* were the initials, do you say?" exclaimed Dent, with emphasis.

Mr. Sparks repeated them with perfect simplicity and wonder.

"I have reason to believe they belonged to some person of the name of William Langton," added Wetherby, almost equally surprised.

"William Langton?" repeated Dent.

"Yes."

"Who was he?"

"That is precisely the knot in the skein of mystification I wish to unravel. I know no more than the bare name. When I can find out the man who bears it, let him look to himself; by Heavens! I say, let him look to himself!"

Again Wetherby thanked his informant, who thereupon took his departure, intent upon designs that boded no good to the peace and successful operations of Mr. Tom Shaw.

"Now let us see what time we have before us," said George.

"Have the goodness to hand me over the 'Bradshaw,' old boy, will you?"

"The next train to Waverney Junction starts from London-bridge at two p.m."

"And the next after?"

"At four o'clock."

"Then at four, by your leave, we start," said George, producing some bread and cheese, by way of lunch.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SERGEANT BROWNE AGAIN.

WHILE George Wetherby and his friend were waiting for the four o'clock train to carry them to Waverney, Mr. Squelch, accompanied by Sergeant Browne, the detective officer—who, as the reader will remember, had charge of the case of the late baronet's murder—was proceeding at full-speed express in the same direction.

"I think, sir, we shall be able to clear up the mystery at last," said the sergeant respectfully, addressing the solicitor.

"It appears that we are, at least, on the trail, at all events. *Superanda omnis fortuna ferendo est*," answered Mr. Squelch, glaring sharply at the other with his grey twinkling eyes, and snapping his teeth as though he would eat him up at a mouthful.

"Just so, sir,—of course," responded the sergeant, who did not understand Latin. After which the two men sat quietly staring out of window for some time.

"I hope Sir Walter Lee will be able to give us a little help, sir, in tracking out this chap, sir," said Browne, presently. "The woman says he went abroad. That maybe, sir, or it mayn't be; there's no telling whether she mayn't be setting us a trap: anyhow, give us only a thread as a clue, sir, and I'll warrant I don't give it up until I've brought it clearly home to him, or some one else."

And the sergeant, who was a very innocent and simple-looking personage, with a clean shorn face, suddenly shot out a gleam of intelligence from his stolid-looking eye, which proved that he was not so simple as he seemed.

Nothing further was then said; and Mr. Squelch and his companion sat in profound silence, broken only by an occasional remark towards the end of their journey. Arrived at the Waverney Junction station they proceeded on foot to Waverney Court, where, after making due inquiry, they were informed that Sir Walter Lee was at home. Mr. Squelch being well-known to the footman who answered his summons, was respectfully requested to walk into the library, and to sit down.

In a few minutes Sir Walter came hurrying into the room. He

held forth his hand cordially to his legal adviser, but he started, and turned a shade paler than usual when his eye rested upon the detective, whom he evidently did not expect to see. In an instant, however, he recovered himself, and bowed slightly towards the sergeant, who responded, on his part, most respectfully.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen!" said Lee, carelessly. "I am pleased to see you, Mr. Squelch," he added, turning towards the hard-faced little lawyer; "though from perceiving Mr. Sergeant with you, I presume you have come to see me professionally."

"Well, yes, Sir Walter; but we're not the less welcome, I hope, on that account?" said the lawyer, smiling, and rubbing his hands.

"Faith! I don't know that," replied Lee, with a somewhat constrained laugh. "I fear your's is not the most pleasant business."

"Is it not gratifying, my dear sir, to know how we are protecting your interests?"

"Truly, that is the only favourable light to view it in, Mr. Squelch," replied Lee; "but what is the matter in hand now?"

"The same little affair we saw you about on a former occasion, Sir Walter," said Sergeant Browne.

"Has anything further transpired, then?" he demanded, quickly.

"Well, something, at least, that we hope may lead to something of more importance by-and-bye," responded the little lawyer.

"It's been a long time in hand, sir," added the sergeant—"it's been a long time in hand, sir, but we've not let this little case slip out of our minds, sir; we never do; and I think we shall be able to bring it home, somehow, before long."

"But what have you done?" demanded Lee, shifting his position, uneasily.

"I shall leave the sergeant to acquaint you with the purport of our visit in his own way," interrupted Mr. Squelch, as though he were determined he would have nothing to do with revealing anything to anybody.

"Proceed, then, Mr. Sergeant, I beg; for really, as you may well suppose, I feel most deeply interested in this unhappy affair."

The sergeant, being thus solicited, forthwith proceeded to relate the whole of the circumstances which had transpired since their last interview in connection with the discovery of the late baronet's stolen watch, brushing his hat with white worsted gloves during whole of the time he spoke.

It appeared that, after many months' investigation, and after even the police authorities had almost given up in despair the expectation of bringing the matter to an issue, Sergeant Browne at last had his suspicions aroused in regard to a woman who had for

some time borne no high reputation in Liverpool. In short, the young men at the pawnbroker's shop were able to identify her, and swear to the identification, as being the same person who had pledged the watch which Sir Walter Lee, as well as his butler, had already certified as being the one which had belonged to the murdered proprietor of Waverney.

Upon being boldly accused, and the proofs of her complicity laid before her, the woman had burst into a flood of tears, and admitting the truth of the accusation, had expressed her willingness to confess all her share in the matter, and everything she knew in regard to it. Her statement was, that at the time in question she had been keeping a lodging-house in one of the back slums of Liverpool, which, being situated also near the docks, was chiefly patronised by the sailors and intending emigrants of the lower classes who came from London and the provinces. Amongst the latter class she had for a few days in her establishment a man who had just come up from London, intending to emigrate to the United States by the next sailing vessel proceeding to New York. This man went by the name of Walter Lee; and the woman, being pressed for a personal description of him, stated that he was a tall, gawky fellow, who, when he walked, shambled along, and seemed almost as though his limbs, which were large and bony, though rather mis-shapen, would fall from one another. She added that his hair was red, and that, from certain words which he occasionally let fall from his lips, she believed he had been in the service of some gentleman. This fellow it was who, the day before he was to sail, produced the gold watch in question, and stated that he had bought it below the value in London, and that he wanted to dispose of it, if he could do so quietly and with any profit. The unscrupulous landlady, who frankly admitted that she suspected at the time he had come by the article dishonestly, offered to try and sell or pawn it for him, provided he would allow her a commission upon the amount she obtained. This he had consented to do, and it was thus that the watch had been pledged, the worthy woman taking good care she would remain in the shop, to be subjected to any unpleasant questioning, as brief a time as possible.

"Now, what we want to know, sir," said the sergeant, in conclusion, "is, if you can throw any light on the mystery of whom this man is. Plainly, his adopting your name——"

"The impudent scoundrel!" muttered Lee, between his teeth.

——"is the greatest proof that he wished to conceal his own name——"

"Not much doubt of that," interposed Mr. Squelch, drily.

——"and," went on Sergeant Browne, "that he must be known to you, and probably is well known in this neighbourhood,

Do you suspect anybody whom the description given would meet, and who might have——"

Sir Walter, who had seemed almost in a trance during the latter part of the sergeant's speech, so much so as not to heed what he had been saying, got up, and paced the room in violent agitation.

"Do you say this fellow's name was *mine*—Walter Lee?" he exclaimed.

The sergeant gave a knowing leer at the lawyer, who chuckled and rubbed his hands with evident relish and enjoyment.

"No, sir," said the former, "we don't say that was his name. Most likely it *wasn't* his name. But that was the name he went by."

Sir Walter paced the floor, biting his finger-nails in his nervous excitement, until he had almost gnawed them to the quick.

"Can't you afford *any* clue, my dear Sir Walter? Come, now, my dear sir, don't be annoyed, but *think*," observed Mr. Squelch, soothingly.

"Have you any recollection of anybody disappearing from Waverney soon after the murder?" demanded the detective, eyeing the excited baronet curiously, while he pretended to be merely studying the pattern of the carpet.

Lee was still silent.

"Try if you can't think, my dear sir," urged Mr. Squelch.

"For my part," pursued the sergeant, cautiously, "I have had my suspicions upon *one* man, but I have not been able to fix upon him with sufficient security hitherto. I want but a straw to turn the balance against him."

Lee returned to his seat, and fixed his eyes sternly on the police-officer. It seemed as if he had been undergoing an inward struggle, and had now made up his mind upon a certain point.

"You will excuse me, Sir Walter," Sergeant Browne went on, deprecatingly, "but, as you are aware, I have had the charge of this case from beginning to end, and I have always been strongly of opinion that whoever committed the murder must have been well acquainted with the locality; how else could he have escaped without any traces of him being discovered?"

"I must say that I was always of the same opinion myself," answered Lee, quietly. "But, right or wrong, the account you give me of the woman's confession has awakened my suspicions against a man who, though certainly he does not do me the honour to bear the same name as myself, that of Walter Lee, appears to answer the description you give of him in many more respects than one."

Sergeant Browne drew his chair a little closer in, and Mr. Squelch gave his teeth a sudden snap, which corresponded with the words—

"Yes, yes, Sir Walter! and who—who was that man?"

Lee, in a very clear and precise tone, then informed his visitors that a man named Thomas Shaw, who had been gamekeeper upon the estate for many years, and who had never enjoyed a very respectable character, had, shortly before the stolen watch turned up at Liverpool, quitted his service.

"This man," went on the baronet, calmly, "received a sum of money from me on account of his ancient servitude; with this he went, I believe, to Liverpool, intending to emigrate thence to New York."

"And he," cried the serjeant, thumping the table, "was the very man I had all along suspected! He was the man, Sir Walter, and no one else!"

"By Heaven, then, depend upon it, he *was* the murderer!" cried Mr. Squelch.

"I presume, Sir Walter, you have not seen him since?" the serjeant said.

"On the contrary, I saw him but a day or two ago."

"Ah!"

"Where, my dear sir—where?"

"In this very park."

"What! has he returned to England, then?"

"He has!"

"What a fool!"

"He sought me out, and begged me to give him some pecuniary aid——"

But at this moment a footman entered the room, bearing a slip of paper on a salver for Sir Walter Lee.

CHAPTER XLIV.

GEORGE WETHERBY'S AMATEUR DETECTIVESHIP.

THE paper which was placed in Sir Walter's hand was a scrap of note-paper, upon which a few words had been roughly but legibly pencilled.

"Who gave you this, James?" demanded Lee of the footman as he glanced at the memorandum.

That functionary replied that "It were Mr. Wetherby, and another gentleman as were with him."

"Mr. Wetherby? Indeed!" ejaculated Sir Walter, in surprise. He took the paper to the light, the better to read the words, which, being written in pencil, were rather indistinct. They ran as follows:—

"*Mr. George Wetherby begs the favour of a few minutes' interview with Sir Walter Lee, immediately. Most important.*"

"Excuse me for ten minutes, gentlemen, will you?" said Lee turning towards the solicitor and Sergeant Browne.

Mr. Squelch had already raised his hand deprecatingly, and was beginning to say—"Now, my dear sir, do not, I beg—" But Sir Walter Lee, long before that fussy little gentleman could finish the sentence, had quitted the library, and was shaking hands with Mr. Wetherby, who, to his great surprise, was accompanied by his old friend and fellow campaigner, Lieutenant Dent.

"We must really apologise for disturbing you, my dear Lee, in this unceremonious fashion," Wetherby began.

"No apology requisite, my dear fellow, especially as you have given me the unexpected pleasure of seeing another old friend's face as well as your own."

And Lee now held out his hand to his former comrade in arms, with the hearty frankness of a soldier. Though, however, the latter accepted the proffered hand, there was something of constraint and uneasiness in his manner as he did so which did not escape the keen perception of George.

"I fear it will scarcely afford you so much pleasure," said Dent, "when you know the object we have come about."

"The deuce! Have you not come for the pleasure of seeing an old friend?"

"No!"

"*C'est dommage!* What, then, have you come about?"

"Merely to acquaint you, Sir Walter, that a burglary will be attempted upon this house, most likely either to-night or to-morrow!"

"A burglary?"

"Yes!"

"My dear fellow, you are jesting!"

"I was never more serious in my life! It is a certain fact!"

Sir Walter Lee scrutinised the faces of his two friends, to endeavour to detect a lurking smile; but their grave faces checked him, and convinced him that, whatever their statement might imply, it was plainly said in sober earnest.

"You say there is a burglary to be attempted upon this house?" he said, at length.

"Yes!"

"How and where, in the name of wonder, did *you* come to know anything about it?"

"We will explain," replied George. "A gentleman of my acquaintance, who was invited to participate in the expected plunder, informed me that an old servant of yours was the instigator, and was himself about to make the attempt."

"An old servant of mine?" repeated Lee, gravely.

"A fellow named Shaw.—Tom Shaw was his name, was it not, Dent?"

"Ah! Shaw is going to attempt to rob my house, is he?"

Wetherby replied that it was to convey this information to him that he and Dent had come to Waverney, and he then as briefly as possible put him into possession of the facts of the case, just as Will Sparks had recounted them to himself.

Sir Walter listened with compressed lips that expressed a fierce determination.

"Follow me, *mes amis*, and I will introduce you to a couple of gentlemen whose advice in this matter may be useful," he said, leading them into the library, where Mr. Squelch and Sergeant Browne were waiting.

Formal introductions between the four then ensued.

"Mr. Sergeant," Lee went on, "I think we shall require your assistance professionally to-night, if you are not otherwise engaged."

"At your service, sir, quite," answered Browne, with great alacrity.

"Tis well. We shall then, perhaps, be able to get the person of whom we are in search into your power without much difficulty."

Perceiving that all his auditors were evidently mystified, and did not comprehend the meaning of his words, Sir Walter Lee explained to Wetherby and Dent that the sergeant was employed in the elucidation of the mysteries attending the murder of his unhappy uncle, and that he, with Mr. Squelch, was now present for the purpose of gaining certain information respecting the identification and apprehension of the said Tom Shaw, upon whom grave suspicion had alighted.

"Suspicion in regard to the watch, my dear sir," interposed the little lawyer, briskly. "We must not necessarily conclude that, even if he had the watch, he was the murderer also."

"If the robbery of the watch should be brought home to him——"

"The possession of the watch, my dear sir, you mean."

"Well—if the possession of the watch should be brought home to him, the rest will look very black for him."

"Very black, my dear Sir Walter, most certainly; there are *prima-facie* grounds for the inference, no doubt," returned Mr. Squelch, urbanely.

"Let us prove that against him, gentlemen, and we'll soon manage the rest; let me have hold of him by the arm, and we won't be long before we have him by the neck," added Sergeant Browne, drily.

"Well, gentlemen," pursued Lee, "if the information Mr.

Wetherby brings should prove correct, we shall probably catch this fellow Shaw in the plain and open act of breaking into this house."

"You don't say so!" cried the sergeant, delighted.

"And now, gentlemen, what do you advise me to do?" demanded their host, when the present state of the case was understood by all of them.

"I think, my dear Sir Walter—really, I think you cannot do better than leave the whole affair in the hands of our friend, the sergeant," replied Mr. Squelch, insinuatingly.

The proposition that Sergeant Browne should undertake the guidance of the matter into his own hands was eagerly agreed to, though Mr. George Wetherby swore most heartily that, inasmuch as he had put them upon the scent, he would be in at the death, and would not permit Sergeant Browne, or any other sergeant or police-authority, to do him out of the pleasure of a little amateur detectiveship on his own account.

Sergeant Browne, for his part, expressed his readiness and willingness to act in accordance with the wishes of the gentlemen, and did not by any means wish to debar from Mr. Wetherby any pleasure which that gentleman might derive from being a detective-officer. In short, Sergeant Browne was as good-natured and obliging as any other prudent member of the force, and would have agreed almost to anything with the prospect of a handsome pecuniary reward for his services. To add, moreover, to the sergeant's easy state of mind, Sir Walter rang the bell for wines and spirits to be brought into the library forthwith. And, when the glass was in his hand and the soul-warming beverage at his lips, Sergeant Browne was ready to assent to anything.

After a short discussion, the sergeant stated his opinion that Mr. Wetherby and Lieutenant Dent should by-and-by return very quietly to the "Blue Boar Inn," for the night, at which place the former gentleman had arranged with Will Sparks to communicate with him the movements of himself and Shaw. It would be advisable, so the sergeant argued, that Waverney Court should wear as much as possible its ordinary aspect, so as to excite no suspicion on the part of Shaw that his attack was anticipated.

"Now, my dear Sir Walter," cried Mr. Squelch, who cared not to tarry in a house that was to be attacked at night by burglars, "this is really very excellent advice of the sergeant, upon my word; and—and for my part, I have just recollected important business, which I cannot possibly, my dear sir, put off; I must be in town this evening; and—and so you will be quit of me, for one, immediately."

"Oh, you'd better stop and see the fun out—bother business!" suggested Wetherby, with boyish gaiety.

"Impossible, my dear sir, impossible," returned the little solicitor, in visible alarm.

Browne having partaken liberally of the refreshment provided for him, said he thought he would, with Sir Walter's permission, examine the premises by day-light, so that he might be prepared for all emergencies, and he would then take up his quarters at the "Blue Boar," where he would have an opportunity of communicating quietly with the other gentlemen, and should, perhaps, have an opportunity of keeping his eye upon Shaw and his companions.

"Certainly," replied Lee. "If you will come with me, sergeant, I will conduct you over the place myself. Gentlemen," he added, turning to the others, and speaking in a low voice, "I will ask you to remain here, as I do not wish to frighten poor Grace, and if she were to see so many of us searching about, it might do so."

While Lee and the detective-officer were absent, Wetherby and Dent amused themselves with the handsome collection of books which the late proprietor of Waverney Court had collected with much care and expense; and by admiring the beauties of the highly cultivated garden which lay spread out at the foot of a handsome terrace, upon which the French window they were standing at opened.

"Lee ought to be a happy fellow, at all events," said George, staring out of window.

"Why ought he to be so?" replied Dent, quietly.

"Why!—because he has everything to make him so."

"How do you know that, *mon ami*?"

"Lee has, besides wealth, rank, youth——"

"Granted."

"Beauty, and health," went on George.

"All very good things, certainly."

"And a young and beautiful and virtuous wife, who almost idolizes him."

"True," replied Dent, coolly. "And the latter you probably think—knowing, my dear fellow, as I do, your own matrimonial tendencies—to be decidedly the best ingredient in the mixture of them all. But have you enumerated all the manifold blessings enjoyed by our friend, Sir Walter Lee, which you appear to imagine should lift that gentleman to a state of beatitude?"

"Haven't I enumerated enough already?"

The lieutenant hesitated a moment.

"No," said he, quietly.

"Indeed!"

"Indeed, no," the lieutenant replied, closing a book he had been looking over with a sharp bang. "Admitting our friend to be armed, in the words of Hamlet,

"Against the stings and arrows of outrageous fortune,"

may he not yet, think you, be subject to the

'heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to'?"

"What has he to cause him the heart-ache? Tell me that."

Dent shrugged his shoulders, and a scornful smile played about his lips.

But just then Sir Walter Lee entered the room and put a stop to the dialogue, for which Dent was probably not sorry.

Lee was this time alone.

CHAPTER XLV.

LIEUTENANT DENT.

"You are, then, quit of the sergeant?" said Wetherby, as the baronet entered.

"Yes; that obliging member of the force has departed in order that he may keep his eagle eye upon the quarry," replied Lee, with an affectation of playfulness that was too plainly an affectation only. "And now, gentlemen, I must beg you to forgive me for having kept you so long from the society of my dear little wife. If you will come with me we shall no doubt find her somewhere in the garden. She's *always* in the garden. But *allons!* I'll waste no more time in apology, but must e'en throw myself upon your mercy. As for you, Dent, my dear old comrade—what is the matter with you? you are as glum as a monk. I don't think I have heard you speak scarcely a dozen words since you have honoured old Waverney Court with your esteemed company."

"I am not very well this afternoon," replied Dent, curtly.

"Indeed! Good Heaven, my dear boy, why on earth didn't you say so before?"

Both Lee and Wetherby expressed their sympathy, and the latter suggested that a medical man should be sent for; albeit, he was rather astonished that Dent had said nothing about being ill to him before.

"Pest!" cried the latter, starting up at the proposal with a bitterly scornful laugh. "I am only like many other hypochondriacs—the pain is likely enough to be more in my imagination than in my heart."

"Oh, in that case, there is nothing like a little fresh air and vigorous action to dispel the demon," answered Wetherby. "The former, if you are willing, we will take now; the latter, we shall enjoy to-night. Let us into the garden; I long to behold again my charming cousin Grace."

"*Allons*, then!" said Lee; and he led the way into the garden.

Here they found Lady Lee giving sundry instructions to the

attentive old gardener, and scarcely less attentively employed in gardening herself at the same time. My lady was beyond measure delighted to see her cousin. When that gentleman made his appearance, coming down the stone flight of steps leading from the terrace, her ladyship gave a little scream of pleasure, ran towards him, and gardening and everything else except him was for the nonce forgotten. But when she presently perceived her husband and the other gentleman, who very politely saluted her, military fashion, she blushed deeply, curtsied demurely, and seeming rather ashamed of her enthusiasm, hung down her pretty head like a damask rose, which, blushing in the genial sunshine, hangs its head, chided by the evening zephyrs.

Lady Lee, however, quickly recovered herself, and vowed she was highly delighted to see both the gentlemen; and, indeed, as I have already observed, she certainly seemed so. Mr. George Wetherby, for his part, was not backward with similar protestations to his pretty cousin, overwhelming that young lady with charming blushes, which his numerous and high-flown compliments called forth. Nor was Lieutenant Dent much behind-hand in paying pretty compliments to her ladyship. In the presence of Grace he appeared to have forgotten the heavy apprehensiveness which oppressed him; but while he complimented liberally, he complimented in a quieter way.

"I have certainly understood that the gardens of Waverney Court were beautiful," said Wetherby, gazing around upon the lovely scene of gay parterres and rippling fountains with admiration.

"Does it equal your anticipations?" demanded her ladyship, her pretty face beaming with pleasure at the expected reply, and almost ready to clap her little hands with delight.

"Every flower seems to vie in its efforts to reach the standard of blooming loveliness which has hitherto captivated the eyes and hearts of all men who have had the felicity of beholding their pretty mistress."

"For shame! Cease your flattery, sir, I beg. I am not a child now, and am too old to be teased," returned my lady, pouting and blushing, and trying to look dignified, but laughing good-naturedly all at the same time. And the next moment she was almost pulling the amused gentleman in the direction of a noble peacock who was spreading out his glorious plumage upon one of the terraces, and whom, her ladyship assured Mr. Wetherby very earnestly, was certainly the most beautiful bird that had ever displayed his golden tail since Eve had given him a name in Paradise.

Whilst Mr. Wetherby was thus enjoying the pleasant prattle of his cousin Grace, Lieutenant Dent was walking arm-in-arm with Sir Walter, and carrying on with him, apparently, a most animated

and earnest conversation. Every now and then the young lawyer could catch the sound of their voices wafted in disjointed whispers on the still afternoon air; then again, as a turning in the pathway took them out of sight for a few moments, the only sounds which greeted his ear was the singing of the birds, the humming of the bees, and the soft voice of the girl by his side, calling his attention, perhaps, to this thing or that, or sometimes chiding him with girlish petulance for his inattention to what she had been saying to him a minute before. To confess the truth, Mr. George was so much engrossed with his attempts to observe Lieutenant Dent and Sir Walter Lee, that he was scarcely so attentive to her ladyship's prattle as gallantry from him demanded.

As the reader is aware, Mr. George Wetherby did not for one moment doubt that Lieutenant Dent was possessed of some secret in connection with his friend, the baronet's, former life, which caused both those gentlemen considerable uneasiness of mind. Dent, indeed, had at one time admitted as much. What that secret could be, the young barrister was continually asking himself, but in vain.

"Now," thought he, "they are conversing of that secret. Bother it!" he muttered, inwardly; and so great were his feelings, that he forgot his fair companion, and almost uttered his thoughts aloud. "I will not worry myself about these things. Why should I render my life miserable in bootless anxieties concerning the affairs of other people? If Lee has any terrible secret which will not bear the light of day, what have I to do with that?"

But then came the reflection that the dear girl, whom he regarded almost as his own sister, was bound irrevocably to that mysterious young man whose affairs he had just resolved to make himself anxious about no more. Her happiness in life was irretrievably linked, nay, wedded, as it were, with his happiness. Not only was her peace of mind at stake, but that of her poor father and mother—those kind-hearted creatures who had ever, in the sight of George Wetherby, been almost as a father and mother to him. Was it not his duty to watch, tenderly, acutely, anxiously, over everything that might affect them, even in a minor degree? Much more, then, was it so when it was no small matter that might happen, but that which would entail their misery for the few years more of life which yet remained to them.

And George Wetherby was conscious that his arguments to show that all this was "no business of his" did not convince even himself. That secret of Lee's *was* his business; and he would almost have forfeited ten years from his life cheerfully then and there, could that secret have been so far revealed to him as to afford him the assurance that Grace's happiness, at least, was safe.

He was aroused from his reverie by my lady bursting into her soft, ringing laugh, which sounded like the musical tinkling of the bells in the temples and palaces of fairy land; and her ladyship's pretty face was looking mockingly into his.

"I—I beg your pardon!" stammered George, in confusion and great perturbation, "what—what were we talking about just then?"

"What were we talking about, sir? And you beg my pardon! Upon my word, I should think you ought to do so; and to go down upon your bended knees, sir, to beg it!" cries the lady, derisively. Here have I been asking you three times, sir, for your opinion of this little grotto, and you have been staring at the toes of your boots, without paying the least regard to me or the query, and as lost to the world and all that is in it as if you were yonder marble Cupid, whose sole occupation is to be shooting at nothing without an arrow, and to bathe his feet in the limpid fountain."

"My dear girl," began Wetherby, apologetically, "I was really just at that moment thinking of—of something else which——"

"Of course, you were, sir; but I can shrewdly guess what you were thinking about."

George glanced at her face anxiously. It was grave and impenetrable. There was, however, a scarcely perceptible twitching about the mouth.

"What was I thinking about, Grace?" said he.

"You were thinking of Flora—ah! you see I know all about it, sir, so you need not take the trouble to deny it."

Though this made Wetherby turn rather red in the face, and look what is vulgarly termed sheepish, it was certainly a relief to discover that his real thoughts were not suspected, as he, for the moment, had illogically suspected they might be.

"Where did you hear of that, Grace?" he said, bashfully. "I—I don't know that there's anything in it—that is to say, you know—hem!—well, then, I won't deny it. What do you think of her, Grace? She is a nice girl, now, isn't she? and I'm just eight-and-twenty, and so—and so——"

"And so—exactly so," Lady Lee added, with mock gravity.

"But have you seen Flora since—since it was all arranged? How—I hope people won't get talking, and making a fuss. Why the deuce can't a fellow make a fool of himself quietly? Tell me, how came you to know that——"

"Oh! a little bird whispered it to me, you know. But don't be too curious. Oh! you sly old fox! Well, never mind, Georgey; Flora is certainly, as you say, a very nice girl."

"By Jove, Grace, I am glad you think so," returned Wetherby, with decided *empressment*.

But at this moment Lee and the lieutenant rejoined them. George Wetherby could not but notice a most visible change had taken place in the manner of the young soldier since his private conference with his fellow comrade of the Crimean war. Scarcely half-an-hour previously he had been so morose and fretful—nay, gloomy—as to call down the strictures of Wetherby upon him. *Now*, on the contrary, he seemed almost boisterous in his mirth and high spirits. Laughing, joking, jesting;—in short, it seemed as though he could scarcely keep his joyousness within moderate bounds. Wetherby remarked all this and marvelled. Twenty times did he ask himself what his sudden change could import. Was it real mirth, or only hollow gaiety, assumed to hide a lurking canker at heart?

While they were waiting for tea, Lady Lee had occasion to quit the room for a few moments, an opportunity for which Lee had apparently been anxiously looking. He drew up his chair nearer to his friends.

"I have not said anything to Grace about this expected burglary," said he, in a low tone; "neither do I intend doing so. It would only alarm her needlessly."

"How do you intend to keep it from her, then?" demanded Dent.

"She is sure to suspect something," added George.

"Fear not; I'll manage it, somehow."

"I don't see how."

"I do, though."

"How?"

"As soon as you leave here, in order to get into communication with our confederate, I shall propose to Grace to walk over to the Rectory. I will then give the Rector a hint to keep her there all night out of the way."

"The proposition is good," said George, approvingly; and Dent assented to it also.

Just then Lady Lee came back, and presided over the tea-table.

The meal being over, George suggested some excuse to get away, so that Lee might have the opportunity to escort his wife to the Rectory.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"THE BLUE BOAR."

"THE Blue Boar" was one of those old-fashioned inns, with the quaint irregular fronts, which yet stand scattered here and there along the country roadside. Surrounded by its pretty pleasure-grounds, in which the villagers of Waverney were wont to play at bowls, and

other rustic sports—fresh, young, and verdant—the old inn looked strong and hearty, and seemed to bid defiance to the unrelenting hand of Time. It was to the “Blue Boar” that Wetherby and his friend, the lieutenant, upon leaving Waverney Court, directed their steps. The evening was mild and genial. In the west the sky was serene and golden. As the two gentlemen wended their way along the dusty road, and drew nigh unto the “hostelrie,” the scene which met their view was peaceful and picturesque. Sitting on the wooden benches in front of the “Blue Boar” were a number of rustics of both sexes; drinking and smoking, laughing, and enjoying themselves in their own rough way; and their voices and revelling sounding fitfully upon the still air of the evening.

So intent, however, were Wetherby and his companion upon the object of their visit to the “Blue Boar,” that they bestowed but little heed to its frequenters, or to its outside appearance. But even the young barrister, unsentimental as he was, except when Miss Flora Phillips was concerned (and then he was sentimental enough in all conscience), even he, I say, could not but be inspired with something of the rural beauty of the scene.

“By Jove, Dent,” said he, halting a moment in the middle of the road, “there is something about an old-fashioned country inn like this that has a peculiar charm for me. There is the spirit of romance, sir,” went on George, enthusiastically—“a spirit which I admit such ignoble wretches as *you* may, perhaps, fail to appreciate—in an old-fashioned inn like this. Ancient double-bedded rooms, my boy, with a ghost in every closet, and a secret trap in every floor.”

Upon which the two gentlemen passed through the throng of revellers, who stared at them with open-mouthed wonder as they went by. They ascended the flight of three stone steps, and one well-sanded wooded one—the obsequious landlord retreating backwards to allow them to enter, and smiling and bowing politely to them as they did so.

Would the gentlemen have a private room? Would the gentlemen be so kind as to walk this way? A nice quiet room overlooking the pleasure-gardens, perhaps—though the trees in the said garden, as well as the flowers and the bushy arbours, were looking sadly autumnal?

“No, thank you, landlord,” says Wetherby, passing on. “At least, not at present. We will go into the public parlour now, and you can bring us ale, bread, and cheese, and so forth—anything you have in the house, and ready to your hand.”

“Yes, gentlemen, thank you; it shall be in immediately.”

“We’re travellers,” goes on Mr. George, carelessly. “We just come from the north by the rail. We may want a private room

to ourselves by-and-bye, and—and we shall most likely sleep here for the night."

Somewhat curtly desiring their host to lead the way, Dent, followed by Wetherby, passed through the throng of gossips who were congregated round the bar, and soon found themselves in the little parlour, where only a few guests were assembled, and these mostly yeomen and tradesmen of the village, who had come thither to enjoy a little social talk over their pipes after the various labours of the day.

"I suppose there has been nobody making inquiries after me—that is to say, after Mr. Wetherby?" said George, as soon as they were seated at a table by the bay window in the parlour.

The jovial landlord, having wiped his fat hands upon the white apron and his negro-looking lips reflectively upon the back of his hand, replied that he didn't think any such inquiry had been made; but he would ask the barmaid, and that young damsel being consulted, he presently returned with the positive assurance that there had not.

"No matter," returned George, negligently. "If any person should ask for Mr. Wetherby I will thank you, landlord, to send him in to me. I rather expect a fellow who is going to buy some sheep of me to drop in here this evening to arrange the matter—that is all."

"I think I caught a glimpse of our *confrère* among the people standing at the bar as we passed by," Dent whispered, as soon as the landlord had departed.

"What—of Will Sparks?"

"Aye: he was talking to two or three fellows of his own look and stamp."

"Are you sure of it?"

"I am not quite sure 'twas he; but I think so."

"At all events, I will speedily ascertain."

So saying Wetherby sauntered into the bar, and loudly requested the ogling barmaid to supply him with a cigar. Whilst he was being served, he cast his eye around the place, and in a remote corner there was Will Sparks sure enough, in the midst of three country-looking fellows, who were talking in an undertone, and drinking and smoking, and one of whom, from his tall, gawky, and ungainly appearance he at once set down in his own mind as Tom Shaw.

Wetherby walked over to that part of the place, and under pretence of reaching the gas-burner, to light his cigar, whispered in Will's ear—

"The flag-staff in the pleasure-gardens in half-an-hour."

Will gave him a significant wink, and went on talking with the

others, who were discussing wrestling and prize-fighting in general. All this passed in a few moments, and without the others detecting the bye-play.

Satisfied thus far, Mr. Wetherby returned to his friend in the parlour, informed him of the whispered arrangement he had made with Will, speculated upon the other cut-throat looking characters who were in his society, and impatiently waited for the intervening thirty minutes before he was to hear what communication Sparks had to make, to slip away.

"It is nearly the half-hour," he said, at last, and looking at his watch for the fourth or fifth time. "You will be with us, will you not? or would you sooner wait here and watch the movements of Shaw?"

"Which you please."

"Come with me, then; but stay—we had better not go out together—both at the same time. You go first, and I will follow."

"Nay, *mon ami*. If I go first and our friend, Mr. Sparks, sees me at the place of appointment, he may not perhaps recognise me, and may, therefore, be afraid to come to me."

George Wetherby got up and put on his hat.

"*Très-bien*," said he, turning to the door; "*je vais chercher le rendez-vous*."

Before, however, he had time to quit the room, the stout landlord came rolling like one of his own hogsheds into it. He held a slip of dirty paper in his hand, and which he handed over to Mr. Wetherby, saying that a person outside had desired him to deliver it.

"From the fellow who wants to buy my sheep, I suppose, eh, landlord?" said George, receiving the paper carelessly.

The moment, however, the fat host had gone away again, he was eagerly perusing the dirty scrawl which was scribbled in black lead pencil—Dent looking eagerly over his shoulder.

The communication was very brief and laconic.

"I cannot meet you at the time agreed. There is one in it besides me, and I think they half suspect me. If it is dark enough they mean to make the attempt to-night. You know what I mean. But I will be at the place you mentioned as soon as ever I can manage to give my precious companions the slip for a few minutes. So keep a sharp look out for me, as I dare not be away from them long without upsetting everything."

"Hurra!" cried the enthusiastic barrister, waving the missive over his head. "Then there will be two fish to be caught instead of one. But let us get into the grounds, eh, general? and mount guard over our flag-staff without delay."

Accordingly the two gentlemen left the parlour one by one and

met again presently in the pleasure-grounds, which were large and well laid out, surrounded by pretty little arbours. As it was now past seven o'clock, it had grown dusk. Nevertheless, lest they should be remarked loitering about the place, they settled themselves quietly in one of those arbours whence they could command both a view of the flag-staff and the inn, which was now lighted up for the evening, where, in short, they could see everything, and yet had the advantage of remaining unseen.

They had been waiting thus a long time, and yet Sparks had not made his appearance. The twilight had merged into darkness—a darkness which only the faint glimmer of a few stars and the distant glare from a couple of windows in the “Blue Boar” tended ineffectually to dissipate. Yet the tall flag-staff and the looming shadows of the surrounding trees could be clearly distinguished in the background of the dark blue sky. And no one was yet there.

At last, just as some distant clock was striking nine, the figure of a man emerged silently from the open door of the “Blue Boar,” and having glanced cautiously round him, hastened at a quick pace towards the place of rendezvous. He stopped upon perceiving Wetherby and Lieutenant Dent approaching, and seemed half inclined to turn back. Dent, however, pronounced his name in a low tone, which reassured him, and he advanced slowly and hesitatingly again.

“Mr. Wetherby?” he demanded, in a low voice, as he came within ear-shot.

“All right, old fellow; come along into this arbour. Here we shall be quiet and uninterrupted,” replied George.

“I am sorry to have kept you waiting so long, gentlemen,” said Will, when they were ensconced in the summer-house. But you got my letter, I suppose, sir, and so you know the reason?”

“You say there is someone besides this Tom Shaw?”

“The other chap, sir, who was jawing when you came up? We call him Ned, sir. I don't know what's his other name.”

“But there were four of you whom I saw,” said Wetherby, in surprise. “I presume the tall, lanky fellow with the bushy head was Shaw?”

“No mistaking him; he looks like a poker red-hot about the head. The other one you mention, sir, was only some country bloak who came talking to us about the match; he's nothing to do with us.”

At this moment Dent started to his feet, and held his finger to his lips.

“What's the matter?” inquired George.

“Hush!” whispered Dent.

“I didn't hear anything.”

"I thought *I* did, though."

"What?"

"I thought I heard some footsteps behind us."

"Psha!" returned Wetherby, "it was only the rustling of the wind."

CHAPTER XLVII.

IN WHICH THE REAL DETECTIVE OUTWITS THE AMATEURS.

"AND you make the attempt to-night?" said Wetherby, when the three had satisfied themselves that Dent's imagination as to the footsteps had misled him.

"Yes; oh, Lord! to think that I should ever be mixed up in such an affair as this," said Will, with a groan, that was irresistibly comic.

"You found no difficulty, then, in getting these rascals to take you into their confidence?" said Dent.

"Not a bit of that," returned Will, chuckling. "Tommy Shaw was only too glad to get me. Bless your heart, Tommy knows very well that my noddle is worth two of such empty lumps of bone and gristle as his. I just dropped in upon him, sir, this afternoon, and I found he had settled everything with this here Ned and that they were going off to-night. 'Tommy,' says I, 'I've been considering that there as we were a-talking of yesterday.' 'Have you, Will?' says he. 'Yes, Tommy, I have.' 'And you'll go with us, mate?' says he. 'Well,' says I, 'you see, Tommy, I am hard-up, and it won't do, you know, Tommy, for a chap as is hard-up to be too particular; and so, Tommy, I've made up my mind, and though I'm not used to these sort of things, I will go with you.' 'By gum, mate,' says he, 'you're a brick after all and we'll share and share alike, all three of us! We are going off by the five o'clock train, on the quiet, so as to have the whole of the evening before us; and if we find things all right and straight, we are going in for it, neck or nothing, to-night, and so——'"

Sparks suddenly stopped in the middle of his recital, for Dent had again held up his finger, as though to enjoin silence, and was intensely listening.

"The wind again," said George. "You are nervous to-night, old boy."

Dent shook his head and smiled.

"I am positive I heard somebody's footsteps upon the grass," said he.

And scarcely had the words passed from his lips, when a man's figure appeared somehow before them, as though he had dropped from the branch of a tree, which spread out from the trunk by the side of the arbour.

By the faint starlight, Wetherby recognised him as the uncouth-looking yokle with whom Shaw and the others had been conversing at the bar.

"Sorry to interrupt you, gentlemen," said this individual, seating himself amidst them with perfect effrontery. "Don't let me disturb you, pray."

Wetherby, Dent, and Will looked at each other in blank dismay.

"Who the devil is he?" whispered the former.

Will shrugged his shoulders in helpless bewilderment.

"I'm dashed if I know anything about him more than I told you," he replied.

"The moon doesn't show very full this evening, gentlemen; though the stars are out pretty well," the unwelcome visitor observed, very coolly.

Dent replied very shortly, and whispered something in Wetherby's ear, and the latter murmured a few words to Will Sparks, the import of which was that they must move out of their present quarters away from their unabashed intruder, in order that Will might say what he had to say as quickly as possible, and then get back to his burglary-intending friends without exciting their suspicions. Dent, however, seemed disposed to get rid of their guest in another way.

"Are you aware, my friend," said he, angrily stroking his moustache, "that I and these two gentlemen came into this arbour for the purpose of having a little private conversation?"

"Dear, dear, who would have thought that now?" answered the other, composedly lighting a pipe; "but la, now, don't let me disturb you?"

"You *do* disturb us."

"Oh, then master, I'll go away again. I just came here," went on the man, not making the slightest evidence of his intention to move; "to know if any o' you gentlemen were going down the London-road to-night——"

"No, we are not, thank you," interrupted Dent, impatiently.

"Because master, I've got a capital trap outside, and I thought I *might* give you a lift. The fact is I don't care about travelling alone at night. It's said there's a queer set o' characters in Waverney just now, and this is just the sort o' night for a robbery, I'm thinking—if it would only turn a little darker. To tell you the plain truth, gentlemen, I saw two or three fellows in the bar just now, that I don't like the look of at all."

Will Sparks looked in an uncomfortable amazement at the speaker, and then at Wetherby and Dent, who were scarcely less staggered than he.

"Dash my buttons," ejaculated Will; "but what the deuce do you mean?"

The young officer was, however, not so much taken aback as to lose his presence of mind. In a moment he was upon his feet, and the next he had seized their mysterious visitor by the arm and the collar of his smock-frock. Nor did the latter offer the least resistance to this aggression, but quietly permitted himself to be thus pinioned without a struggle.

"Have the goodness sir, to explain the meaning of your remarks."

"It's no use, old boy," interposed Wetherby, sadly crestfallen; "you may depend upon it it has all come out by some unaccountable means, and that the birds have flown before this."

"They can't have flown very far, sir, at all events," laughed the stranger. "They were in the bar yonder [a few minutes ago, and are, I fancy, at the present moment,] beginning to wonder what has become of their faithful auxiliary, whom I would recommend to be prepared with some good story to account for his absence. And I think, gentlemen, we need detain him no longer, as I pretty well know their movements now, and we can then go back to Waverney Court, where, doubtless, Sir Walter Lee will be anxiously expecting us."

During this speech, which was delivered in the quietest tone in the world, and ended with a little chuckle of self-complacency, Lieutenant Dent had relinquished his hold upon the speaker.

"Is it possible!" he exclaimed, gazing vacantly into the semi-obscurity.

"Sergeant Browne!" added Wetherby, in the same tone.

"The same, gentlemen; at your service," replied the sergeant, laughing grimly. "I beg pardon, gentlemen, for playing this little professional joke: but I do like to astonish people. Ha, ha! And if I was to give you an exact account of the plan laid down by your friend, Tom Shaw, I daresay I should surprise you."

"Will nodded, and admitted that he certainly should."

"Well, then," pursued the detective dictatorially. "It is proposed that eleven o'clock this night, if it is dark enough (and it is dark enough), you will proceed to Waverney Court; clamber the fencing of the park, and approach the house cautiously in the rear. Your friend Shaw has a key which he has contrived, and which will unlock the gates leading into the garden. Through this you will enter; and, having obtained admission into the garden, access to the conservatory will be comparatively easy; and, as the game-keeper is aware, the conservatory leads into the drawing-rooms, and the whole of the scheme is prepared. I should however, say, that in order to avoid the clamour of the mastiff which guards the back

of the house, Shaw gave that poor animal yesterday morning some poisoned meat, and it is probable the dog may now be dead. Should any little difficulties in the way of doors, locks, bolts, and so forth, arise; you will trust implicitly to the skill of your friend Ned who—as I (having some professional knowledge of that gentleman) can assure you—is perfectly competent to fulfil all, or any such duties as may fall into his way. And now, my friend, haven't I given you as good and exact an account of your proposed proceedings as you yourself could have given me?"

Sparks muttered a few words, importing that the facts were indisputably as the detective had related them.

"And now, I suppose, Mr. Sparks, you wonder how I came to know them, don't you? Then I'll just tell you a wrinkle, comrade," said the sergeant, laying his finger on Will's shoulder, and speaking to him in a low, confidential whisper. "When you and your acquaintances were devising your scheme in the little arbour on yonder side of this garden, I was just at the back of you, and overheard every word."

Mr. Sparks drew a deep breath, with the most undisguised admiration of the sergeant's adroitness.

"Well, you had better be off now, my man," added Mr. Browne, condescendingly, "or your friends *will* smell a rat. They don't suspect anything is in the wind yet, but if they do, they'll hook it."

Wetherby and Dent likewise added their imperative requests that Sparks should return to his companions without delay, in case they should discover they were betrayed."

Mr. Sparks quickly stepped off, and the others could dimly see his dark figure retreating across the grass-plot, until he mounted the steps and entered the lighted inn-door.

"And now, if you please, gentlemen," said Sergeant Browne, "we will go back to Waverney Court."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SIR WALTER'S SECRET.

As soon as his guests had left Sir Walter Lee in order to keep their *rendezvous* with Mr. Will Sparks, the bland smile with which that young baronet had bade them *au revoir* faded from his lip, leaving his noble face careworn and almost haggard. "Fool!" he muttered with an angry frown. "Fool! consummate idiot that I have been! I might have been sure it would come to this sooner or later. Poor Grace! poor innocent child! God help and protect her! I would have spared her the anguish of hearing of her husband's shame. It was for this I schemed and plotted; for this that I bore

the taunts and insults of that miserable wretch. But—pish! my schemes have failed, and perhaps I am served well for my base and cowardly conduct in dragging that poor innocent girl into a marriage with *me*, without daring to tell her what I am! Ah! would I had the courage to break it to her myself!” He turned sharply and rang the bell. A footman responded to the summons, of whom he demanded in a hasty tone, which corresponded with the action, where Lady Lee was? Before the servant could reply, her ladyship came tripping into the room, holding a very tastefully-arranged bouquet in her dainty little hand.

“Flowers—flowers again—always flowers!” cried Sir Walter, gazing upon his pretty young wife with a kindly smile.

My lady laughed and blushed and laughed again; and then, seeming to have a consciousness that she was rather a silly little body to keep on laughing and blushing, and to be so very fond of flowers (though she couldn’t help it, for the life of her) and that she ought, therefore, to make some excuse for herself, she tripped timidly up to her now smiling lord, and holding the said flowers under that gentleman’s nose, said, insinuatingly—

“Are they not beautiful flowers?”

“As beautiful and pure almost as she who gathered them,” replied Sir Walter, in a whisper.

“Where are George Wetherby and his friend?” demanded Grace.

“They have gone, dear; they had some business which called them away, and so—and so—I could not prevail on them to remain.”

“Have they not called at the Rectory, then?” said the girl, in surprise.

Lee hesitated. Should he tell her the truth—the truth as to the expected burglary, that is to say? He had, just a few minutes before, bitterly seemed to repent having done otherwise in regard to something else—in regard to *his own great secret*, in fact. My lady noticed his hesitation; she noticed, also, that her husband was pale—paler than usual—and that his mouth twitched convulsively every now and then, as if he were racked by some inward struggle. She taxed him with his unusual manner and his pallid cheek, and the evasive replies he made her, to soothe her anxiousness, only served to confirm her fears; and sinking down into a chair, she burst into a flood of tears. This, of course, made Sir Walter forget, for the moment, all his own troubles, and putting his arm round his wife’s waist, he sought, by tender endearments and loving smiles, to reassure her.

“There, go and put on your bonnet, you silly child!” said he, smiling, but smiling sadly. “We will go for a little walk; we

will go over to the Rectory ; the evening is mild, and the trip will be pleasant."

But her ladyship was not to be so easily vanquished. Drying her eyes, however, and looking up into those of her husband with an expression of mingled love and determined resolution that would have conquered any man who was in love with her, and would very likely have made any man in love with her who was not so already, she resolutely vowed and protested she wouldn't move a single step from where she was, nor listen to anything, until dear Walter had told her *everything*.

Lee reflected a moment, and then, seeming to think that he could only appease the determined young lady by taking her frankly into his confidence—at least, frankly into his confidence so far as the burglary was concerned,—he at once gently broke to her the fact of his expecting the house would be attacked that night by burglars ; that he intended to have kept this from her, but that he could not keep *any* secret from her, he feared. He made this apparently candid statement with such plausibility and seeming reluctance that my lady was utterly deceived by it. She was rather alarmed by the expectation of a burglary, very naturally, but she seemed to be much relieved that there was nothing worse.

"And I suppose, sir," said she, with sparkling eyes, "you wanted to get me out of the way, so that I should know nothing about all this until it was all over, and the danger was passed?"

Sir Walter laughed pleasantly enough—indeed, how could he do otherwise?—and patting my lady on her blooming cheek, as though she were a little girl, bade her go and put her bonnet on now, in order that they might get off without further bother or delay. But that wilful young lady had now taken it into her head that it was her bounden duty to remain with her husband, and share with him all the dangers which menaced home ; and so she stoutly protested her determination to abide by that duty. Nor was it until Sir Walter had coaxed, and wheedled, and entreated, and especially vowed that there really was no danger at all (except my lady remained by his side, and so unnerved him) ; and assured her moreover, that Mr. George Wetherby, and his friend, Lieutenant Dent, were coming back presently to take care of him ; and, finally, that the reason all these gentlemen were so anxious to get her ladyship lodged at the Rectory for the night, was, *not* that they wanted to get her out of danger, but that the presence of a lady would only incommode them, and serve to make them nervous ; so that, in short, Sir Walter began coaxing and entreating again as hard as ever, and at last my lady wavered in her resolution, hesitated about yielding, finally did yield, and then went, slowly and reluctantly, upstairs to put on her bonnet and mantle, ready to set forth for the Rectory.

And when she came down again, dight in the coquettish garments, very pretty and captivating, indeed, did she appear,—so, at least, thought Sir Walter, who was waiting for her, hat in hand; and so, indeed, must anyone have confessed who might have had the felicity of so beholding her; a trifle stouter, perhaps, than when the reader was first introduced to her,—but then that was as a matter of course,—and as my Lady Grace had something of natural majesty about her, it only made her look more queenly.

“Are you ready?” said Sir Walter, regarding her proudly, and yet with a profound melancholy in his gaze, which might, perhaps, have renewed the girl’s apprehensions had she observed it.

Upon one condition,” said her ladyship, still holding back.

“And that—”

“Is, that you promise to take care of yourself.”

“I promise,” replied Lee, smiling.

“Faithfully?”

“Most faithfully.”

“Then, sir, I will consent to trust you with George Wetherby and his friend.”

And then, with her little plump arm resting upon his strong and manly one, they went off together towards the Rectory.

It seemed just then to have occurred to my lady, that if there were going to be a burglary attempted upon Waverney Court that night, it was rather a strange thing the proprietor thereof should be aware of it beforehand. She demanded an explanation.

Sir Walter had no alternative but to tell her the whole truth of the matter. How Tom Shaw, the gamekeeper, who had frightened her so dreadfully the other day, had laid a plot to break into the house of his quondam master; how a poor man, whom George Wetherby knew, had somehow come to discover that plot, and thereupon to reveal it.

The young baronet seemed anxious to say as little as ever he could in regard to Shaw; but when he ceased speaking, Lady Lee clapped her little hands, while her face beamed with pleasure.

“I am so glad,” cried her ladyship, gleefully, “that it is no worse!”

“Worse!—what could be worse than a robbery—eh, you silly child?” returned Lee, smiling gravely at her enthusiasm.

“Oh! I don’t know; I was afraid that—that—”

“What did you fear, Grace?”

“I—I—well, I didn’t know, Walter. I have not said anything to you about it before; neither should I speak of it now, if I didn’t feel perfectly assured I was wrong, dear, and that the explanation about the robbery has cleared up all my doubts—”

"Your doubts, my dear girl? I do not understand you."

"That is," rejoined Grace, stammering, and blushing deeply, "I thought perhaps this man had some claim upon you, and that you didn't wish me to know anything about it. And, oh! I am so glad to find out the truth that he was what you said; it is quite a load taken from my mind—it is, indeed."

The smile on Sir Walter's face for a moment became overcast.

"You seem rather desirous to find something wrong about your husband, Grace," he said.

"No—no: Heaven forbid! Why, are you angry with me, Walter?"

"I could not be angry with you, Grace, do what you would, my dear. If you were to plunge a dagger into my breast; if you were to betray me into the hands of my enemies; even if you were to prove faithless to the vows you have uttered, my heart might break, but it could not cherish an unkind feeling towards you."

He ceased speaking, and walked a few paces in silence.

"Do you think, dear," he added, in a low tone, "you could be equally lenient with *me*?"

"Oh! Walter, you so noble, and true, and wise, and honourable! Why do you ask such a question of me? What could *you* do wrong?—what could you do that I should ever have to forgive?"

"The best, the noblest, the wisest have erred, Grace; and I am none of these. Besides, do you not confess that you have already suspected me?"

"Suspected you!" cried the girl, clinging fondly to his arm. "No; no, dear—that is, I feared—I scarcely know what. But I thought, perhaps, you might have some secret sorrow, Walter, which your wife may share, even if she could give you no comfort."

"But if the time should ever come, Grace, when you find that I am not so noble, wise, and strong, as you in your love have pictured me; if I should stand before you a cowardly craven, who had striven with his fate to hide his weakness, his faults, his crimes, but lacked the courage to confess them to you boldly—I say not that such a case as this may ever come to pass—but if it did, tell me, dear, do you think you could cherish any kindly feeling for me still, or would your affection be turned to contempt and bitter scorn?"

The girl seemed terrified by the bitter vehemence with which he spoke. She glanced up into his face with fear and trembling. Yet she shrunk not from him, but clung more closely to his side.

"Answer me, Grace," Lee added, anxiously, "answer me."

Grace said something in a whisper, and though they were walking along a public road, the next moment the young man was passionately straining her to his breast.

By this time, however, they had got almost as far as the Rectory garden-gate. And Sir Walter and Lady Lee, haply recollecting that some one who knew them might perchance see them—in which case their present affectionate attitude might seem rather ludicrous—they at once hastily separated from their embrace, and trying to look as unconscious and unconcerned as possible, they then resumed their way to the Rectory.

The Rector and Mrs. Evelyn were in the garden, though it was now getting dusk and the air rather chilly. Mr. Evelyn was lopping off the decayed branches from his shrubs and trees, as busily and energetically as though his very life depended upon his activity; and his worthy wife, who seemed rather flushed and angry, had just come out from her proper culinary domain to complain to her unsympathising spouse of the scandalous conduct of a new servant-maid, who had been gossiping with the handsome young baker's man, and so suffered a certain pie to get burned in the oven for want of "turning," and "Who, you know, my dear, had all the morning before her, and has really done absolutely nothing but peel the potatoes!"

To which sad category of complaints the tiresome Rector had the impudence to smile good-naturedly, not seeming to be angry or to sympathise in the least, and remarked that it was very natural the girl should like to talk to the handsome young baker's man. He insinuated that even Mrs. Evelyn was fond of talking to handsome young fellows at one time of her life; and that if the girl had let the pie get burned, had not the greatest Saxon king whom England has known done precisely the same thing likewise?

Mrs. Evelyn was about to express her justifiable indignation at this unthrifty view of the case, when the voice of Sir Walter Lee, who was coming up the gravelled pathway with Grace leaning on his arm, arrested the words on the lady's tongue, caused her to forget her grievance, and her angry frowns to change to beaming smiles.

"Hard at work, Mr. Evelyn!" cried Sir Walter, approaching. "I need not wonder how it is Grace is so fond of flowers and floriculture. The taste is hereditary, I suppose. I was not, however, aware that Mrs. Evelyn was also a devotee at the shrine of Flora."

"Flora!" returned Mrs. Evelyn, who was not well up in the heathen mythology, hastily; "dear me, yes; she was here just now, Sir Walter. Did you want to see her? She was saying that she had met George—that is George Wetherby, my nephew, you know, Sir Walter—and that he wouldn't scarcely stop to speak to her, and—and really I think it very strange behaviour of George that he should be so near us here, and yet not come to see his own flesh and blood; and she, poor girl——"

"Whom, my dear, do you mean by the 'poor girl'—his 'own flesh and blood?'" interrupted the Rector, smiling. For it was a playful way sometimes with that roguish parson to jest and tease his wife upon the disjointed and roundabout method that well-meaning, but not over-intelligent, lady had of expressing her ideas.

"No, my dear, I meant Flora Phillips," replied Mrs. Evelyn, taking the joke all in good part, "and she was as surprised as I was to think that he should actually come all these miles, and yet not to be able to say one word, &c., &c., &c."

This, of course, called forth from Sir Walter Lee an explanation of the object of George Wetherby's unexpected visit to Waverney, of the efforts that gentleman was making to further the ends of justice in preventing the burglary upon Waverney Court, and so forth; which explanation Sir Walter opined would exonerate the young fellow from the imputation of undutifulness. And for the other part, my Lady Lee was no less certain that her cousin, George Wetherby, was not guilty of any want of warmth for the fair Flora, since he had been praising that young lady up to the skies that very afternoon in a manner which could leave no doubt whatever of his sentiments.

But when this was all over, and George's offence had been pardoned as not being so very outrageous—though under any circumstances they would have been pardoned just the same—Mrs. Evelyn reverted again with infinite curiosity to the expected robbery.

"Dear, dear, what dreadful things we do hear now-a-days," said she, with mingled sympathy, regret, and horror, when she had the account of George Wetherby's revelation repeated to her for about the third time. "Dear me, it is no use telling me; I know there is much more crime and wickedness going on in the world now than there was when I was a girl. At all events, Sir Walter," said Mrs. Evelyn, smiling, despite herself, "I am very glad to see you have come over here out of the way. I'm dreadfully afraid of fires and thieves myself, but I think we're very well protected here, you know; and I can accommodate you both very comfortably for the night."

But here it was Sir Walter's turn to interrupt the good lady by informing her that though he should be glad to avail himself of the accommodation for Grace; it was his duty to return to Waverney Court and protect his house and property. Which proposition Mrs. Evelyn—apparently thinking that a whole skin was better than all the property in the world—had some difficulty in viewing in the same light.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE AMBUSH.

SIR WALTER LEE reached Waverney Court just as George Wetherby and Lieutenant Dent, returning from their expedition to the "Blue Bear," where they had left the sergeant to change his countryman's disguise, for his more refined habiliments, were entering the great gate.

The three, therefore, ascended the flight of steps leading to the terrace, and went into the house together.

Lee was, of course, very anxious to learn the result of their interview with Will Sparks, which they related to him just as it has already been related to the reader.

Sir Walter, notwithstanding his present grave mood, laughed heartily at the trick the detective officer had played them.

"The evening is dark," he said; "the few stars that are out do not give sufficient light to be likely to deter them. I expect they will make the attempt if they meant to do it at all."

"It will not be before eleven o'clock, though," responded Dent.

"True; meanwhile, we may as well make ourselves as jolly as we can, with a glass of wine, cigars, and any other scanty comfort we can find."

This "scanty comfort" Lee provided them with no niggard hand, and seated in the library, the three gentlemen awaited the arrival of Sergeant Browne.

"It is curious how one seems to enjoy this unravelling of mysteries, and the tracking down to punishment of the guilty."

"It is true," returned Lee, thoughtfully. "Most people do enjoy a little amateur detectiveship."

Almost before Lee had ceased speaking, the aristocratic Jeames came into the room to inform his master that Mr. Browne, with two other persons, were waiting below.

These two other persons proved to be a couple of the local police, whose services the cautious sergeant had been careful to impress, in order to apprehend the burglars with more security. The sergeant did not evidently feel perfectly satisfied with his recruits, who were certainly strong-limbed, but heavy, loutish fellows.

By half-past ten, everything was in readiness. Lee had quietly called Giles, the butler, aside, and had acquainted him with the state of affairs, and had instructed him to prepare the rest of the servants, so that they should not be alarmed. Having duly done this, Mr. Giles was to see that the house had as much as possible

the appearance of its inmates having retired to rest. All the lights were to be extinguished except one, which one was to be left burning advisedly at the most distant part of the building. This one light was the suggestion of Sergeant Browne, and was to be used as a kind of decoy, so that while the house might seem at rest, it might not seem suspiciously at rest.

After a second examination of the premises, having regard to the information he had received from Will Sparks, Mr. Browne pointed out the probable course of the burglars when they had obtained access to the garden, and indicated the portion of the conservatory at which they would endeavour to force an entrance.

Sir Walter Lee had a brace of pistols, and furnished Wetherby with a brace also. As for Lieutenant Dent, he never travelled without his pistols, so that he was provided for. The sergeant did not make so much fuss and display, but there was no doubt he was sufficiently armed likewise.

Sergeant Browne disposed of his men under the shadow of a couple of large myrtles, himself being a little in advance. Lee and the other gentlemen were concealed behind shrubs or trees near at hand.

"Now, gentlemen," said the officer, respectfully, but authoritatively; "in case of your lives being in danger you may, of course, fire; otherwise, you must remember, we want to arrest these fellows, so that they may be brought legally to give an account of themselves.

"Never fear, sergeant, you shall have the reward I have offered if we can bring the murder of my uncle home to this man. I am anxious to bring that mystery to light as anyone."

The night had proved latterly quite dark and gloomy. Even the few stars which in the earlier part of the evening had peeped out of the obscurity had hidden their heads behind their azure curtains, and so bestowed their dim and fitful light upon the earth no more. The thousand exotic plants—aloes, myrtles, &c., looked, in the obscurity, queer, misshapened creatures; while here and there a tall and stately pine, rearing aloft its bushy head upon its slender stem, appeared to the fancy a hideous, effete form.

The watchers waited quietly and silently in their ambush during the first half hour; and beyond an occasional whisper, not a sound was heard. But at length, Mr. George Wetherby, who was somewhat of an irritable disposition, began to grow impatient at all this silence and inactivity.

"Deuce take these fellows! I wish they'd come if they're coming," he muttered fretfully between his teeth, and stamping his feet with a loud clang upon the wooden floor, which resounded so violently that, at such a time, it sounded like the booming of a drum.

"I don't know how you can expect they'll be such fools as to come if you get making such a row as that," returned Dent in a whisper. After which the volatile young barrister put a constraint on himself, and condescended to keep silent for a few minutes longer.

At last the sound of a distant clock striking twelve fell upon the ear with a low, solemn intonation, which, under the circumstances, was particularly impressive.

The attention of every one was now stretched to catch the faintest sound. But for a time nothing could be heard but the hard breathing of themselves, and the rapid beating of their own hearts.

After listening breathlessly for about half a minute, Wetherby fancied he caught the sound of a distant footstep, as though some one had jumped from a slight eminence to the ground; and then he thought he could hear a man's voice, but whether it were so in reality, or whether it were merely the work of his imagination, he was by no means sure.

"Did you not hear the sound of a footstep?" he whispered, breathlessly, in Dent's ear.

The lieutenant nodded, placed his finger upon his lips, but made no verbal answer.

A loud click quite startled him. It came from that part of the conservatory where Sir Walter Lee had concealed himself. He did not doubt but that it was the "click" of that gentleman's pistol being placed full cock.

Was that a footstep? Yes, surely. There were the footsteps of more than one. Continually, slowly, stealthily, but surely, the footsteps approached along the gravelled pathway; and then the muffled voices of men conversing were again distinguishable.

And then all was once more hushed. Was that a low, dead, grating sound? Or was it fancy? No: Wetherby was certain he was not deceived, for the sound grew loud and more rapid. A few pieces of glass fell to the ground with a muffled crash. Another pause, and dead silence ensued. Next, the slow withdrawing of a bolt was heard; and then the voices of the men became more distinct.

"Tommy!" said one, in a low, husky voice.

And a deep gruff one said something in reply.

"Where is Will?—d—n him!" said the first, in the same hushed tone.

For another moment there was a pause, and Wetherby could fancy the speaker searching around.

"By G—! mate, but I think the — has played us false!"

A hurried exchange of words passed between the two men—for two there evidently were; for the conservatory was now thrown open, and the shadows of two men could be dimly distinguished in the obscurity.

A low, shrill whistle went forth ringing upon the still night-air. It was the signal agreed upon by the sergeant for the advance. In the twinkling of an eye, all was uproar and confusion. Six men rushed forth from their concealment towards the glass-door, where the astonished burglars were standing. An imprecation burst from the lips of the latter. The clash of certain iron instruments upon the floor followed, and the two wretches sprang from the place with a rapid bound.

The shortest of the two men was, almost at the same moment, seized by the iron grip of Sergeant Browne and Dent; and, albeit a strong man, and making a violent effort at resistance, was quickly overcome and handcuffed.

Meanwhile, Wetherby, Lee, and the two constables pursued the other, whom Lee at once recognised to be Shaw, and who, aided by his long legs, had got some yards in advance. Wetherby reached him, seized him by the collar, and was in an instant precipitated to the ground by a terrific blow from the fellow's fist.

"Take that—d—n you!" he muttered, as he inflicted the blow; and, closely followed by the remaining three, he reached the wicket-gate.

At the same moment the pistol Lee held in his hand flashed, and the ominous report ensued. When the smoke cleared away, Shaw had disappeared through the door, and had somehow closed it behind him. Unfortunately, that door closed with a spring. Delay followed. When the door was opened, Shaw could not be seen.

"I know I hit him, though," said Lee.

CHAPTER L.

ONCE MORE IN THE RECTORY GARDEN.

WHILST these stirring incidents had been taking place at Waverney Court, my Lady Lee had been impatiently and anxiously waiting to know the result, under the secure protection of the home of her childhood, the Rectory. This was the first time since her marriage that Grace had parted from her husband; and although this was but for a few hours, it was under circumstances of danger and terror which her alarm for the safety of Sir Walter, acting upon her excited imagination, no doubt, greatly exaggerated. And when Lee, who, somehow or other, was weak enough to be nearly as much affected as herself, had bidden her a tender farewell, until the next

day, she had gazed after his retreating form with sad misgivings, and felt as though her light of life had departed from her.

Good Mrs. Evelyn and the Rector both endeavoured to cheer her in her despondent mood ; the former by the doubtful expedient of mingling with her well-meant consolation all manner of horrible anecdotes, recounting the cruelty of burglars and highway robbers, with which she had become acquainted in her more youthful days, either by the personal experience of her friends or by means of an old copy of the " Newgate Calendar," which her former admirer—the martyred missionary—had lent her upon one occasion, as light reading, when the recorded exploits of other missionaries might pall upon her literary taste. Mr. Evelyn, on the other hand, endeavoured to represent things in their most cheerful aspect, and strove to laugh away Grace's womanly fears. But the girl was to be comforted neither the one way nor the other. She apprehended danger in some form, though her fears were vague and undefined.

This was the first time since her marriage that she was to pass the night in her old home ; to sleep in the room where she had spent her childish years, and to which, ere she had quitted it, she had silently vowed she would come sometimes, as it were, a pilgrim to a shrine of purity, that she might there, in its (to her) holy solitude, seek the comfort and inspiration which its sanctity might bring upon her, to direct her rightly and to support her during her pilgrimage along the road of life, even until she came at last to the great mystery of the shadow of death.

Mrs. Evelyn, irrespective of her reminiscences of the unfortunate young missionary, was full of loquacity and had a thousand questions to ask, the answers to which she generally supplied herself, and making a thousand digressions after her own peculiar way. Added to which there was much discussion as to the proceedings up at Waverney Court ; speculations as to how it was that Mr. George Wetherby had to come to discover the plot of the burglars ; and also as to the probable result. So that it fell out that when Grace retired to her own quiet chamber the night had grown quite old. Indeed, it was a glance at the quaint old clock which stood in the chimney corner, which had reminded Mrs. Evelyn, in the midst of her long-winded lucubration, that it was nearly half-past eleven o'clock, and therefore much later than the ordinary hour at which the folks at the Rectory sought their rest.

When Grace took the candlestick, with the short piece of rush-light, into her hand, and tripped up-stairs into her little room, just as she used to do in the olden time ; and when the little bed, and the large box with dimity covering (which transformed it into a couch) ; and when the crude, deformed-looking pictures, hanging upon the walls, fell upon her view, what a crowd of emotions flocked upon her !

It seemed but yesterday she was sitting in this room, expecting upon the morrow to be married. Nay, it scarcely seemed longer than yesterday when she was sitting at that window yonder, pondering upon her own romantic fancies; wondering whether Sir Walter loved her; wondering whether he would ever ask her to marry him; wondering whether she should ever marry anyone. It seemed only a night or two ago since she had sate at that same window, meditating in this wise, and that when she had quitted it and dropping off to sleep, had dreamed that awful and mysterious dream which had so much and so often troubled her since with vague and superstitious apprehensions.

As she thought of that dream, something of her former superstitious uneasiness for a moment overcame her. The next, however, she recollected how satisfactorily that dream had been accounted for upon philosophical reasoning, and she smiled at her former folly in attaching an undue importance to what was, after all, only a dream. She smiled as she set the candle down upon the dressing-table as she argued thus. For most persons, dear reader, look you, smile at their terrors when they are over. Sometimes, indeed, they smile when they are *not* over, but wish to flatter themselves into the belief that they are.

Grace smiled again, closed the door, pulled up the blind, threw open the window, and sat herself down, trying to fancy it was the same evening when she had been such a silly, weak-minded girl; and trying also, with a sort of triumphant defiance—or rather with a sort of pleasurable feeling of present security—to recal her thoughts, sentiments, and terrors of that night.

And this, mind you, gentle friend, is rather a dangerous kind of experiment for anybody, with the slightest tendency to the imaginative, to try, though I daresay most of us have essayed it at some time or another. There is a saying, that if you make faces in a looking-glass, you will see a certain personage (whose name is not to be mentioned) peeping—and no doubt grinning—over your shoulders; and I fancy there has been more than one bold person, who, venturing on the experiment, has been sadly terrified by catching veritably a glimpse of that personage's face and horns.

¶ The present writer recollects, when he was a small boy, nearly frightening himself and his juvenile cousin into fits, merely by beholding a round table, where we rather expected to find a thief, and, of course, making it up in our minds that it was the latter *instanter*. No doubt it was pleasant for Grace to think, "What a fool I was! I'll just try and reawaken my feelings of that night; and as now I know the absurdity of them, I shall have much the same gratification that I enjoy when I read the sorrows and trials of a charming heroine in a novel, and comfort myself with the re-

flection that they are not true after all." But then, on the other hand, the playing with edged tools resulted in the not uncommon effect of her cutting herself. In short, she became rather nervous and fidgetty, then to have vague misgivings creeping upon her, that perhaps there was something in the revelations of dreams after all. Certainly there were many things about her husband's life—his sudden changes, fears; his wild looks and the incoherent words, which, pointing to some terrible secret, sometimes fell from his lips.

His language to her that very evening, as he had escorted her to the Rectory, too, confirmed that dread suspicion, a suspicion which Grace had long endured, and which, though she had striven to stifle it, had ever and anon sprung up into a blaze afresh. Did he not almost despairingly admit that the time was drawing nigh when something would be revealed that would prove him a weak, culpable wretch—a criminal, perhaps? Did he not, then, seemingly almost in an agony of remorse, ask her if she would still continue to love him?

What could that secret be? Was she—her poor sister Emma—and the unhappy Sir William Lee indeed tied together, as it were, by the hands of an over-ruling destiny, and all of them to encounter an unscrutable end? Was her husband, who was so nobly beautiful in face, and so generous and brave, was he associated with them too? Was her former dream, in short, a veracious prophecy of things that had now become the past, or were still to be developed behind the thick curtain of the future? No, no; it could not be. And yet—

The last words the poor girl had uttered quite audibly, unconsciously that she had spoken them until the sound startled her. The light of the dim rush seemed to have grown more dim, and cast a yellow, lurid ray around. Grace was almost too terrified to glance behind her, for fear she should see something or somebody standing at her elbow, or a spectre, perhaps, sitting grimly grinning at her upon the bed.

Summoning up courage, however, she did glance around, nor did she encounter any unusual sight calculated to confirm her superstitious terror. The rushlight had guttered down and was nearly extinguished by the flooding of the grease, and this was simply the reason of the dim light.

Thus reassured she trimmed the rush, opened one or two of the drawers in the quaint old chest with the clattering brass handles, and which still contained a few things of her own—little nick-nacks, which, as a girl, she had treasured before all things else the world possessed; and in turning over the contents of one of these drawers with a careless, yet tender hand, she alighted

upon a little embroidered scent-bag, the colours of which were faded by time.

A pleasant smile of recognition beamed upon the girl's countenance as she took this little *souvenir* of the past nearer to the light. It had been the work long years ago of her sister Emma. Not just then replacing the bag in the drawer, but taking it with her to the window, she leant out.

Just at that moment the old church clock chimed the hour, and then struck twelve. Somehow in withdrawing her head again into the room she managed to strike her elbow against the sash. The sharp pain caused her, for an instant, to lose her self-control, and the little bag she was still holding in her hand fell from her grasp. She started forward with a stifled cry, to try to clutch it ere it fell. But it eluded her, and softly descended to the ground.

The pain she experienced, and the annoyance at the result, caused the girl to utter an exclamation of vexation. For a brief period she stood still and irresolute as to the course she should adopt.

Quickly, however, did she make up her mind as to what was to be done. From her own window Grace could perceive that of her father and mother, and the light which had recently been burning in the latter was now extinguished. She concluded, therefore, that the good old couple had now retired to rest.

Lightly opening the door, she listened on the landing. Not a sound was there in the house but the rustling of her own dress. Turning back to throw a shawl over her shoulders, she descended the stairs, treading cautiously upon them, so as not to disturb anybody. Her intention was to get quietly into the garden, to recover the little scent-bag, and then return noiselessly to her own room without delay. Of course, knowing the place well, she was in no danger of losing her way, and very soon found herself at the outer door, which she unbolted, and then sallied forth.

A very brief search enabled her to find what she was looking for. Picking up the bag, she was about to return indoors, when she thought she heard a faint shouting afar off over the fields in the distance.

She hesitated and listened intently. The night was mild and calm, but somewhat over-clouded, and scarcely a star was to be seen. She could not but recollect that other momentous evening when she had been in that garden before, when the news of her dying sister had come in the morning, when she saw the handsome young Lee after two years of separation, and when, while with her mother, she had heard in the distance the shot which had deprived Sir William Lee of life.

As this new train of thoughts came pressing upon her with a

suddenness and force which caused her to tremble almost with the tumult of her emotions, a new incident occurred, which, coming as it did just then, bore terrible import to her excited fancy. It was the distant report of fire-arms, and what was still more remarkable, it seemed to come from the direction of Waverney Court.

A thrill of dismay passed through the girl's frame as this ominous sound fell upon her ear. Surely this night was not to repeat the horrors of that upon which her thoughts were already with such intentness fixed. Then she had heard just such a sound, and lo! Sir William Lee was murdered in cold blood! Now, perhaps—though Heaven avert such a dreadful thing!—that shot might bear the mission of death to him who bore the title—alas, to her dear husband, and take him from the fair and beautiful world, and from her, even in the prime of youth.

Good God! was not this thought fearful? Yet it was this thought that now took entire possession of her mind, and caused the hot drops of perspiration to start from her brow. It was natural, perhaps, that a loving wife should fear the worst for him she loved so much.

Scarcely conscious of what she did, so great was the terror—heightened by her excited imagination and superstitious fancies—which now held her its slave, that she felt impelled to walk down the garden towards the little gateway, even as she had done on the former occasion. Had she not obeyed that impulse, it would have seemed to her she had neglected something which fate had appointed her to do. As she approached the garden-gate, at which she almost expected to see her husband, as she had seen him before, another shout fell upon her ear, louder, more distinct, and plainly nearer at hand.

Like a statue she waited, watching the road. She first heard the sound of rapid footsteps coming nearer and nearer, as though from Waverney Court. She doubted not that this must have some connexion with the attempted burglary upon the mansion. In this the reader surmises she was right.

A tall, gaunt figure dashed up the road, the outline of his form but dimly visible, and into the churchyard. Grace recognised the figure as that of Shaw, the gamekeeper, of whom she stood in such alarm and dread. Arrived at the churchyard, the man seemed to hesitate, and then, with a sudden spring, cleared the palings, ran up the avenue leading to the porch, and then, as if changing his mind, turned the garden of the Rectory, and within a few yards from where the terrified girl was standing stumbled and fell.

A shriek of fright rose to the lips of Grace, but she did not utter it. She tried to get back to the house, but her feet refused their office.

It seemed that Shaw for it was indeed he, who, wounded by the shot which Lee had fired at him, had managed to get thus far, and finding himself, from weakness and loss of blood, unable to go further, had sought the shelter of the grounds and fallen down from sheer exhaustion.

"Water! water, for God's sake!" he moaned, piteously stretching out his hand to Grace, of whose presence he had just become aware, and whom he evidently did not yet recognise.

Mechanically, and almost unconscious of her actions, but not so far overcome by her dismay as not still to act with instinctive charity, Grace hastened towards the house, and speedily returned with a jug full of water, which, with a shudder, she gave the man, and which he, clutching eagerly, quaffed at a draught.

This appeared to revive him, for he drew a deep breath, and sinking back again, he attempted to support himself upon his hand, regarding Grace fixedly.

"You—you are Lady Lee?" said he, with emphasis.

"Well, sir, I am," returned Grace, in a faint voice, which had a touch of kindness in it.

"He, he! I know you, my lady! But if I had known you before, I would rather have died than ask you for that water; d—you, and all belonging to you!" he returned, rousing himself with vindictive energy.

"What—what have I done to injure you?" demanded Grace.

The fellow gasped for breath, and then pointed to a wound in his breast, from which the life-blood was rapidly oozing.

"Do you know who did this? Aye, do you know?"

"No; how should I?"

"Of course you don't. Shall I tell you, confound you?"

"My poor man——"

"There, shut up your blarney, ma'am! It was your precious husband who did that for me, curse him! He did it—your husband; and I say, d—— him for it!"

Then he laughed a horrible laugh, and raised himself, staggering, but bolt upright, and stretched his arm out menacingly towards her.

Grace shuddered, and had to grasp the trunk of a tree for support.

"I will be avenged upon him yet, though!" added the wretched man, with a fierce oath. "You think he's a charming man, don't you? He, he, he! I daresay you love him, don't you, aye? Don't you? He, he, he! What would you say if I were to tell you he had married somebody afore he married you? What would you say to that, eh? Well, he has, then; he has married my

little sister; curse them both! And I'm his brother, d'ye hear me, as sure as——”

But a piercing shriek burst from the poor girl's lips, and she heard no more.

She was dimly conscious of the rapid rush of footsteps, and that someone caught her in his arms, and then she swooned away.

CHAPTER LI.

SIR WALTER'S CONFESSION.

WHEN Grace came to herself she found herself in the parlour of the Rectory, with her mother in her dressing-gown preparing restoratives here, and doing something else for the amelioration of her condition there, and on the whole seeming perfectly ubiquitous; while Sir Walter—looking the picture of misery and despair—and George Wetherby and Lieutenant Dent were standing around her.

At first the sight of her husband filled her with ineffable thankfulness and gratitude. A smile stole over her pallid face as she held out her little hand to him. But just as he was about to press it fondly between his own, the recollection of what had lately transpired came upon her—at first dimly and vaguely, and then with a blighting force that seemed to wither up her very heart within her. And then casting upon him a look—an inexpressible look of mingled forgiveness and reproach, her hand fell down beside her.

“Is—is it true, Walter?”

“Is what true, my precious one?” said Sir Walter, tenderly. The girl shuddered.

“What—what that dreadful man says!” replied the girl.

“What did he say, Grace—dear Grace?”

“He said that—that——” but here her voice failed her utterly, and she shuddered despite herself.

“Speak, my dear girl. Do not be afraid. How else can I answer you?”

“He said that—you were married to another, Walter;—is it true?”

Lee for a moment made no answer. But, pale as death, folded his arms upon his breast.

“O God! Answer me, dear Walter! Am not I your wife?”

“My wife!” cried Lee, starting and speaking with startling emphasis. “Yes, by Heaven you are! The villain! Do you mean to say he dared insinuate I was not legally married to you? The wretch is—Well—well; I expected it would come to this at last.”

Lee strode across the room in violent agitation—his hands tightly clenched, and his teeth set fast. Poor Mrs. Evelyn looked on, helpless and aghast. Wetherby, who was standing near the sofa upon which his weeping cousin was reclining, regarded the baronet sternly. Singularly enough, Lieutenant Dent was the only one amongst them who appeared perfectly composed. There, however, he stood, with his arms crossed upon his bosom, and a curious smile playing upon his lips.

Presently Lee turned again to his wife, and kneeling down by her side, took her hand, and held it gently but firmly. Tears were standing in his speaking eyes. By-and-bye he said,—

“This evening, Grace, I told you that the time might come when I might appear in your eyes more dishonourable, worthless, and base than you have ever thought me. That time has come.”

My lady gave a convulsive sob and turned away her face.

As for poor Mrs. Evelyn, her eyes grew so large and opened so very wide it was doubtful whether she would ever be able to shut them again.

“Good gracious me, Sir Walter, you don’t mean to say that you are married to two wives! Oh, you awfully wicked man!” she gasped out in sheer dismay.

The young man heeded her not, but thus went on:—

“I have sought, my dear girl, for your sake and for my own, to keep this secret from you. This secret has, however, been disclosed. Fool that I was! I might have been sure it would be so; and better, perhaps, had it been for both that I should have revealed it to you earlier, and so trusted to your mercy and your love.”

“Do I, then, understand you, Sir Walter Lee, openly to confess that you are a bigamist?” demanded George Wetherby with severity.

“A bigamist!” returned Lee in astonishment and horror. “A bigamist! Great Heavens, no! I am guilty; but I am not sunk so low in infamy and shame as that.”

“You had better make a beginning, Lee, and tell them all,” interrupted Lieutenant Dent, quietly, now speaking for the first time.

“For mercy sake clear yourself, my dear fellow, if you can,” added Wetherby, with earnestness.

Lee took a hasty turn across the room, and then resting himself against the mantelpiece, thus began:—

“I need say little about my early life. You know that my poor father died when I was a mere child. He left me to the care and protection of my uncle, which trust, I admit with heartfelt gratitude, he ever faithfully fulfilled. I will not say much of my career at college; nor, indeed, of my military life. I was a gay,

dissolute young fellow, as many others of my companions were. I doubt I had little and did little to deserve praise——”

“You were a brave soldier, and a generous, openhanded friend, at all events! That I can say in your favour,” interrupted Dent, with a kindling eye.

“Thanks—thanks, my dear fellow! I am glad you can say something for me,” returned Lee, with a melancholy smile.

He took out his handkerchief to wipe his forehead and then went on:—

“You remember that the last time I was at Waverney during my uncle’s life-time was about three years or three years and a half ago. I had then sold out of the army and was leading a regular devil-may-care sort of career in town; getting over head and ears into debt, and not rarely calling down upon my head the censure and moral sermons of my uncle. I stayed with him at that time for some months. Indeed, it was for the purpose of financial retrenchment and to oblige my uncle, that I remained. He thought that while I was in the country and away from the temptations of the great metropolis I should be in less danger and at less ruinous expense than while I was away from the control of his supervision. In this, however, he was unhappily mistaken, as the sequel proved. This was the cause of all my misery, though of all my after happiness also, as it was during this rustication, Grace, that I first became intimately acquainted with your family and you.

“It was during these latter months’ stay at Waverney Court that I, unfortunately, became acquainted with one who has been my ruin—the miserable clog to my life. Living on the estate, as gamekeeper, was a fellow named Shaw, a man who bore a sad character for his drunkenness and the low company he kept, even then, and who was suffered to retain his situation by my uncle, I should presume, upon no other grounds than that he possessed it, and that my uncle was too kind and generous to turn an old servant of the family away. He occupied a little cottage, which was kept in trim order by his sister, a young and certainly very beautiful girl——”

“A minx, I remember her!” interrupted Mrs. Evelyn, turning up her nose with intense scorn. “Don’t you remember, my dear, that I once gave her some nightgowns to make, and she puckered up the seams so dreadfully that I had to——”

“Hush, mamma!” Grace whispered in her ear.

Whereupon, Mrs. Evelyn, who was, no doubt, as curious as anybody in the room to hear the remainder of the narrative which her son-in-law had to relate, put a constraint upon her garrulity, and held her peace.

“Well,” continued Lee, smiling, despite his present sad humour,

at the curious and incongruous manner in which the worthy lady's reminiscences ever and anon cropped up, "it happened one day that I came, by mere chance, in my rambles across this girl, and was instantly smitten by her lovely face. I took an opportunity of seeing her again, and again—by accident, of course—next day. In short, my wild passions were inflamed, and I vowed to possess her—of course, I thought then of nothing but by dishonourable means.

"I made her little presents. I spent much—too much, alas!—of my time in her society. I found her seemingly a good-natured, though utterly ignorant and uneducated girl. I tried every art and wile I was master of to vanquish what I was fool enough to think was her virtue; but all these attempts were in vain. Her virtue!—pish! The young woman was cleverer and more cunning than I. A shrewd, sly girl, with the spirit of a devil beneath the face of a saint! She quickly perceived my infatuation, and determined to make her market of the dolt she had got into her power. Her virtue—such as it was—had been surrendered to one of my uncle's footmen long ago; and if I had been a common clodhopper who boosed at the village inn, I might easily have known the fact. As it was, the clever, polished man of town, as I flattered myself to be, was completely taken in and fooled by an immoral and illiterate country girl who could see through me.

"So admirably did she play the pure and innocent village maiden, in whose ear sin could never whisper without raising on her cheek a blush, that I was ass enough to take her for what she professed herself to be. At first this, of course, only inflamed my desires the more, and I redoubled my exertions, my offers, and bribes, concealed, as they were, under a disguise as specious as the reasoning and entreaties I poured with passionate warmth into her ear.

"But, no: she was too deep for me. She would not see what I meant, until at last, when she pretended that her eyes were opened, and she *did* see, she turned upon me with such apparent loathing and horror, that I was instantly compelled to explain away my laboured reasonings as meaning nothing at all. In short, she would listen to nothing but a legal marriage. I hesitated at this important step; but passion conquered me. I entreated anew; but she was firm. In desperation I yielded, and she won her end. I stipulated, however, that we were to be married privately in London, and that the marriage was to be kept a secret, since I represented that, should it reach my uncle's ear, he would very likely be so incensed with me for my *mésalliance* that it might result in my disinheritance.

"My charming young wife was quite alive to the justice of this

view of the case, and consented to keep the matter as quiet as I pleased.

“To cut a long matter short, we went up to London. My bride, so innocent and beautiful; so clever, though uneducated; so witty, though (I could not disguise it from myself) so vulgar, that I quite forgot her low origin, and willingly forgave the solecisms in her manner, and the ill-grammar which cropped up too unromantically in her tender or witty speeches. We were married, and from that time I was an unhappy man.

“My eyes were gradually opened. My innocent wife startled me sometimes with her conduct, which was not exactly in accordance with her innocence. Her musical voice was now occasionally heard to swear most vilely. She would drink neat spirits and beer with my valet when I was absent, and on my return I would find them sometimes drunk together. But this was not the worst, for I had very soon but too much reason to suspect her fidelity itself. She became so bad that it was impossible for me to live with her. We separated; and during the time my uncle lived, I was continually worried and harassed by her importunities to supply her avaricious demands for money. She threatened to go to Waverney, and proclaim herself to him as my wife, if I refused her or remonstrated, and this although she was at the same time living openly a life of debauchery and shame.

“Upon the death of my uncle I had her more in my power, since I could now defy her threats. I offered to allow her a comfortable subsistence upon condition of her relinquishing her present disgraceful life. This, however, did not appear to meet her views; and, finding that I was resolute now, and that she could get nothing else out of me, she ran away to the Continent with a young viscount, who had only just come of age and into his title, and whom she managed to get into her toils.

“I ascertained, subsequently, that she was living an infamous life in Paris, that she mingled with the lowest of the low, and under the assumed name of Catherine Fleming, was as well known to the gay students of the Quartier Latin, where she lived, as to the omniscient Parisian police.

“Having quitted, as I then had, the gaieties of town life—though I at first only purposed doing so for a time—to dwell upon the estate, which, with the title, had now devolved upon me, I naturally renewed my old acquaintanceship with your father, the Rector—more especially, as he, being the intimate friend of my uncle, and one of the executors of his will, I was, also, in the way of business, brought into daily intercourse with him.

“Thus was it, my dear girl, that I came continually under the

potent influence of your charms. You had grown from a school-girl into a lovely woman during the two years we had been separated. To see you was to admire you. To know you was to love you. It was a dangerous position that I was in. I ought to have been on my guard, and avoided the dangerous fascination of your presence. I was never prudent, however; and instead of avoiding you I continually sought pretexts for being in your society. Not at first—not at first did I apprehend my danger. Gradually only did I come to perceive my real sentiments, and the fearfully strong hold you had gained upon my heart.

“When I did become conscious of my perilous position, and my feelings towards you, and knew that my entertaining them could not but entail misery upon us both, I instantly formed a resolution that I would conquer them, that I would tear myself from your presence, and that I would see you no more.

“Such was my determination one night, not more than a month or two after my uncle’s death; with such rapidity, you perceive, had I fallen into the abyss. On the following morning I had so far mitigated that determination, that though I was still resolved to leave Waverney immediately, and was prepared to start for the Continent almost the same day, yet I thought I could venture just to see you once more before I departed, merely to bid you farewell.

“I did see you. I did bid you farewell. In that interview I forgot all my good resolutions. Contrary to my intention, I let fall from my lips the reason for my sudden departure, and this brought forth a passionate declaration of my love. Scarcely had I spoken it ere the recollection of what I had done almost drove me frantic with remorse. The revulsion of feeling unmanned me. I besought you in an agony of despair to forget what I had said. To speak the truth, I hardly knew what I did say, or what I did. I left you hastily, and Heaven knows I have often wondered since what you could have thought of my extraordinary and inexplicable conduct.

“I went to London, intending to proceed to Rome. But at my club, where I called in casually, a paragraph in a French newspaper, which I saw by a strange coincidence, changed all my projects and plans. It was an announcement that my wretched wife, known as Catherine Fleming, had, in a wild drunken freak, stepped into the River Seine and been drowned.

“I will not attempt to depict the state of my feelings as I read this announcement. Perhaps, indeed, I hope there was something of pity and compassion for the miserable end of her whose fate had, however, unhappily been linked to mine. But the chief, the overpowering emotion that took possession of me was the sense of freedom—the knowledge that I could now return and ask you to be my wife.

"I returned to you. I asked you to be my wife. And yet, Grace, when I contemplated your purity and ignorance of all the evil in this wicked world, and compared it with my degradation, I could not but be oppressed with a blighting consciousness of my own utter worthlessness. I could not bear to think of you looking upon me with horror, and even as I asked you to marry me I determined to conceal from you for ever the knowledge that I had had a wife before, since I could not, if I revealed it, but reveal also the extent of my own shame.

"I invented, therefore, some story to account for my extraordinary behaviour to you ; and to explain the violent accusation I had made against myself, I admitted that I had been leading a gay and vicious life. Indeed, had I not admitted it, I fear my reticence would have availed me little, since my reputation was but too well known, added to which, by my apparent openness, I had the advantage of pleading my own cause.

"There is little more to be told. The explanation I have given explains this also. Shaw was, of course, cognizant of my marriage with his sister, but with the exception of him no one about here was in the secret. Upon my assuming the title and estates, and more especially upon the discovery of my real sentiments towards you, I was anxious, above all things, to get him out of the way.

"I bribed him to go to America, and he went. As soon, however, as he had squandered away the money with which I had provided him, he came back to England to extort more. He found me married to you. Here was the opportunity he desired. I had been to Paris, before I married you, to authenticate my first wife's death. So thus far I was safe. But he perceived my desire to keep my actual position from you. I again supplied him with funds, when, it appears, that not satisfied with my donation, he planned an outbreak upon my house, and—and—God forgive him !—he has paid the penalty.

"And now, Grace, I have made a full and undisguised confession to you. After all, I am, perhaps, more sinned against than sinning. You must remember that all my subterfuges were for your sake. Can you forgive me for the evil I have done? Can you look upon me with kindness and love? Speak, Grace; I implore you speak !"

Lady Lee spoke not, but she gave her husband a look more eloquent than words.

CHAPTER LII.

DENT'S ADDENDA.

"SIR WALTER having now given his explanations," said Dent, quietly, and with his sarcastic smile still playing upon his lips, "I have to ask you, Lady Lee, to permit me to add mine."

"Have you, too, been deceiving me, Lieutenant Dent?" replied the lady, with a faint but most angelic smile upon her pretty face.

"Good gracious me, Lieutenant Dent, what have you been doing?" added her mamma—half fearing there might be a genuine bigamy this time.

Dent smiled, and glanced meaningly at Sir Walter.

"I am guilty, madam, of a too uncommon crime," he replied; "I have been too faithfully preserving the secrets of my friend."

"Heaven help us, my dear!" cried Mrs. Evelyn, in alarm, heeding nothing more than the word crime.

But her daughter put her finger to her lips, and whispered, "Hush!"

Wetherby had been silently looking on, and occupying his spare time in the interesting amusement of biting his finger-nails to the quick.

"I expect I shall have to demand an explanation or two by-and-bye," he said, "unless indeed, our friend is about to volunteer one, which may save me the trouble of asking any questions."

"*Peut être, mon ami : mais nous verrons,*" replied the lieutenant smiling.

"Cut away, then; and be quick about it."

"But really, lieutenant, you don't mean to say you have been marrying two wives?" Mrs. Evelyn interrupted insinuatingly.

"Not quite so bad as that, my dear Mrs. Evelyn, I hope; seeing that I have not yet been inveigled into the desperate act of marrying one. What I have to state may, indeed, be recounted very briefly. In the course of a conversation with Mr. Wetherby I once informed him that I had met Sir Walter Lee with a very beautiful girl upon his arm, in Regent-street. I was not at that time aware of the intimate acquaintance which subsisted between Sir Walter and Mr. Evelyn; and the remark arose merely from the fact of my visiting the neighbourhood of my old comrade's estate, suggesting to my mind an important and romantic feature in his life.

"I was stopped, however, in the relation of my story by meeting Lee in the company of Mr. Evelyn, and as soon as the former recognised me, he called me aside, and put an injunction upon me not

to speak of his foolish and unhappy marriage, with which (had I continued my story to Wetherby I should have explained) I had become acquainted through my meeting with Lee and his wife in Regent-street—that beautiful girl being no other than she.

“I promised I would be silent on the point, but wondered not a little what his reasons could be for desiring my silence. This Lee took an opportunity, when we were assembled in this very parlour, of explaining in his own way—he and I being alone at the time, you must understand, as you, Lady Lee, Mrs. Evelyn, and Wetherby were in the next room.”

“The reasons I gave,” interposed Lee, “were, I think, that I was anxious to keep my former not very creditable connection from the knowledge of the busy-bodies of Waverney, and more especially from the Rector and his family (I beg your pardon, ladies, I do not mean to insinuate you are busy-bodies) as having now a position of respectability to maintain. I was resolved to let bygones be bygones, and to mend my way of life henceforth. I represented that my wife had left me and gone to Paris, which was true; but I did not then state that I was aware of her death, because I thought that by pretending to believe her still alive Lieutenant Dent would better credit my statement, that it was merely for the sake of preserving my general respectability that I wished the matter hushed up, since there were, of course, greater reasons I should desire to keep it secret if she were alive than if she were dead. My real desire was merely to keep the whole affair from the knowledge of Grace. I cared nothing for all the world besides.”

“That was what you said,” replied Dent. “Had you been more candid you might have saved yourself and me much misery.”

“I wish to heaven I had,” answered Lee; “but I little thought you would ever know anything of my second marriage to Grace, inasmuch as I believed your acquaintance with Wetherby was merely a casual one, and you yourself informed me you expected daily to be ordered abroad. It was not possible I could anticipate you should overhear.”

“That I should overhear your declaration of love upon the little island to which we went for that memorable pic-nic,” replied Dent, smiling. “Nor did you imagine for a moment that if your first wife was still alive, I should be filled with horror and apprehension. Nor did you suppose, I presume, that I, being acted upon by these harrowing fears, would write an anonymous letter to Mr. George Wetherby, entreating him by everything he held in regard to prevent, if possible, your marriage with his cousin ——”

“Then you did write that letter?” Wetherby interposed, eagerly.

“Certainly, my dear boy; not a doubt of it. I frankly admit,

with shame, that I was the author of that highly sensational document."

"And this was the cause of your doing so?"

"Decidedly so."

"Permit me, then, my dear Dent, to assure you, in return, that this revelation will relieve Mr. Evelyn's mind as well as my own."

"Does Andrew know anything, then, about all this?" demanded Mrs. Evelyn, pricking up her ears at this with wondrous rapidity.

"He knows that I received the letter of which we speak," replied George.

"Oh, indeed!" returned the lady, with a significant sniff of the nose. "He didn't say anything to me about it; that is all."

And the good woman smoothed down her apron with a quiet and disdainful (though most significant) deliberation, that implied she would have a quiet bonie to pick with poor Andrew when the opportunity of a private conference enabled her to get him into her power.

"My dear aunt," observed Mr. Wetherby, by way of palliating her evidently-ruffled humour, "I think we came to the determination not to say anything of the matter to you, because your ever-thoughtful husband——"

"Well, I must say, my dear, he is that," interrupted the lady, with equal justice and pride stealing through her anger.

"Feared that, if we let you into our confidence, we should only disturb and worry you, without doing any good."

"That is all very well, George," replied Mrs. Evelyn, tossing her head; "but I don't think it proper, my dear, that a husband should keep any secrets from his wife. I never had any—not that I'm a husband, certainly; but a wife's just the same thing, you know—except once, which I remember well (and you'll remember it, too, Grace), when that hussy cracked the looking-glass, trying to clean it with Bath brick, and I didn't like to tell your father, my dear, for fear——"

"But why," interrupted Wetherby, regardless of his worthy aunt's inopportune reminiscences, and turning to Dent,—“but why did you not tell me candidly the whole truth so far as you knew it? Why did you not tell me that yonder blushing bridegroom was already married, and that this was the reason you were anxious to prevent him espousing my pretty cousin here?"

"Silly fellow!" answered my lady, with a sweet smile, which she contrived to divert from George to Sir Walter Lee—which, by the way, caused that gentleman to perform all manner of ridiculous things in testimony of his gratitude.

“What a question!” added the lieutenant. “Have I not told you, my dear fellow, that I had given my word of honour to Lee that I would mention his former marriage to no one? When I sent that mysterious document to you (I should observe that I wrote it at Malta, and enclosed it in a letter to a friend in England, to be posted there by him, so that you should not suspect me)—when I wrote that letter, I say, I wrote one also to Lee, informing him how I had unintentionally become acquainted with his design of marrying (or rather, betraying) this poor young woman whom he *has* so betrayed, while, as I believed, his first wife lived.”

“You had an excellent opinion of me, I must confess,” said Lee.

And my lady smiled very lovingly upon—her betrayer.

“This letter, it appears, never reached its destination; nor did I come to know the true state of affairs until this very afternoon, when I conversed with Lee for the first time since that dreadful evening. I then accused him of bigamy, and so forth, and—in short, the result is now apparent.”

“Well, gentlemen, I must indeed thank you all for your good opinion of me; but, permit me to say, that though I am bad enough in all conscience, I am not bad enough to have ever injured my dear little Grace, except in that instance for which she has forgiven me.”

But at this moment the Rector came running into the room.

OUR TREASURE

A **PLAYFUL** little rogue is he,
 A laughing, romping, roving boy—
 His father's pride, his mother's joy.

Erewhile my heart was sad with care,
 And I was growing tired of life—
 Not tired of Jean, my loving wife.

As one a-wearied with a load,
 I longed for rest—rest anywhere
 Out of this world of grief and care.

What had I done, I asked myself,
 That so much sorrow should be mine,
 And not one ray of bright sunshine?

Jean smiled, and bade me not despair :
 "Those clouds," she said, "may yet depart,
 And sunshine warm your drooping heart."

God bless my Jean ! she clings to me
 As ivy to the castle grey,
 Loving me better every day.

The sunshine came when Willie came ;
 And since then till this very hour
 It has not ceased to warm our bower.

We kissed the helpless thing that lay
 A-sleeping on Jean's throbbing breast,
 And raised our hands—you know the rest.

My home is now a happy home,
 And I am happy at my toil,
 Cheered by my Jean's and Willie's smile.

I sometimes think of those sad years
 When my heart bore its weighty load,
 And I had little faith in God.

And then it is I bow the knee,
 And gazing upwards, bless the day
 My Father took that load away,

And gave me yonder careless boy,
 And that dear wife, so true to me,
 Whose love now fills my heart with glee.

Thus years have fled, and every day
 Of those bright years I've happy been,
 Toiling for Willie and for Jean.



WAVERNEY COURT

CHAPTER LIII.

THE CONFESSION OF TOM SHAW.

THE Rector came bustling into the room. He wore a look of solemn import and anxiety. Beckoning Sir Walter Lee aside, he whispered something into that gentleman's ear, upon hearing which the baronet hastily quitted the room.

"And what does Dr. M'Fergus say, my dear, about the poor man?" demanded Mrs. Evelyn, somewhat panting for breath, the late startling revelations she had heard having whetted her appetite for further sensational food.

The Rector gravely shook his head.

"Not much hope, my dear. Dr. M'Fergus says he may recover, but he don't seem to hold out much hope of it."

"Good gracious, my dear!" ejaculated Mrs. Evelyn, in vague alarm; "and will Sir Walter be charged for shooting him? Really, Andrew, that'll be almost worse than his having two wives—poor young man!"

Dent and Wetherby reassured her on this head.

"He is rapidly sinking," Mr. Evelyn went on. "He seems to have something preying on his mind, and which he wishes to reveal."

"Lor'! my dear, perhaps he murdered Sir William. I always thought, and always said, that it would have been done by somebody who knew the place well, and the papers said so, too, my dear; and that is what made me think so."

Wetherby and Dent exchanged significant glances. They knew that the suspicion of Shaw being the murderer had already taken possession of the heads of sharper-witted persons than Mrs. Evelyn.

"I don't know, my dear, what he is about to confess," the

Rector rejoined, drily; "but he has requested Sir Walter to be present when he makes that confession."

"Good gracious! has he really?—poor man!" returned the lady, hastily; the thought occurring to her that she would like to have a share of the revelation as well as Sir Walter. "I say, Andrew, my dear," she added, with hesitation, "if I can be of any assistance, you know, I am not frightened of a little blood. A woman is always useful in these things; you men, even the best of you, are such bunglers."

The Rector, who perceived the innocent curiosity of his better half, but prudently did not say so, declined this proposal, with a sad smile, and then went away after Sir Walter Lee.

Arrived on the landing of the second-floor, he entered a small but scrupulously clean room, in which was standing an iron bedstead. As he drew near, his pompous step fell lightly, and the hushed voices of three gentlemen, who were standing round that little iron bed, were whispering; for there lying before them, his face overspread with a ghastly pallor, but his eye still sparkling with as much intelligence as ever dwelt there, Tom Shaw was upon the point of death.

"We have waited until you rejoined us," whispered Lee in the Rector's ear. "Poor wretch! there is no time to lose; I fear he cannot get round."

"Gentlemen," whispered Dr. M'Fergus, a good-natured looking little fellow, who was feeling the pulse of the wounded man beneath his well-practised thumb. "I entreat you to hear what the poor fellow has to say, and then to leave him to me as quickly as you can. I will do what I can, and, with God's aid, I may yet succeed in saving his life. I would not suffer him to speak upon this subject now, but that he seems so determined about it that I fear the excitement of restraining him might destroy the only hope."

"Raise me up a bit, mate. There—ugh!—that's it!" murmured Shaw, in a faint voice, to Serjeant Browne, who was standing at the other side of the bed.

This request being complied with, the gamekeeper, fixing his eye upon his former master, began to speak in a firmer and louder voice.

"I've no call, Sir Walter," said he, "to be particular grateful to you, for you have brought me to this here strait. But I don't bear no malice, and as I'm a'most afraid I'm about done over, I may as well make a full and dyin' confession, and they can put the end of me in the newspapers, if they like. Not that I've got much to tell; I've not done much myself, and that's the worst of it. If I'd only poisoned somebody, and got throttled at Newgate, with all the people looking on, and the papers full of me, d—me if I'd cared about this a brass button!"

"You had better proceed with your statement," interrupted the surgeon, gravely. "If you waste time, I can do nothing to save you."

"All right, guv'ner," returned Shaw, recklessly. "Well, then, Sir Walter," he went on, "you remember that night when Sir William was murdered? Well, you know, in course, Sir Walter, that I was at that time still in my berth on the estate. I did not go away until that time when you gave me that there money to go to Ameriky. On that night I had been taking a stroll over the grounds with my gun in my hand, and my dawg, Jenny—poor old Jenny! you'll forgive old scores, Sir Walter, and take care of poor Jenny when I'm gone,—you'll find her, poor bitch, over at my crib at Rotherhithe as I'll speak of by-and-bye,—won't you, Sir Walter? D— me, I can't bear to think of the poor faithful devil being left alone!"

The baronet, to this appeal, pledged his word that poor Jenny should be looked after and cared for if her master died. Nor did any of the gentlemen present hear this request on the part of the burglar without a softer and gentler feeling towards him stealing into their breasts. Even from so rugged and ill-conditioned a nature as his, it seemed, the light of affection was not entirely excluded.

Shaw was visibly comforted by the assurance, and thus went on:

"On that wery evening, then, Sir Walter, as I was a-saying, I and Jenny was taking a stroll about the park. The night was very fine, and the moon were a-shining as bright as the sun at noon. I don't exactly recollect what the time was, but as I was passing along through the park I saw some one a-coming out of the hall very quietly. From his grave and slow walking, I knew at once it were Sir William. 'Sir William,' says I, to myself, 'this is a curious sort of time for you to be prowling about in this fashion by yourself.' So I just hid myself up behind a clump of holly-bushes, and watched him. I had scarcely concealed myself when Sir William drew up almost to the place where I was. I soon saw enough to make me stop there. I caught sight of his face in the moonlight, and if I was goin' to live a thousand year, instead o' bein' done over now, I should never forget that there look of his until my dying day! His face was as white as death, but his lips were firmly squeezed together, as though he had made up his mind to a thing, and held his intention between his teeth, so as not to let go of it again. Well, I looked very hard at him, and I saw that he had a brace o' pistols—one in each hand. I stood still and almost held my breath; but I had scarcely time to collect my thoughts, when Sir William lifted up his right hand, and fixed the muzzle of

his pistol on his temple, and then fired it off. Without a sound, he fell down upon the ground, dead! Without a moment's consideration, I put my hand into his pockets. In one of them, his breastcoat pocket—I found a paper packet, sealed up, and his purse, containing a few sovereigns, and some silver. At this moment I heard somebody shouting out for help near by, which, as I found out afterwards, must have been you, Sir Walter; so I thought it was high time for me to cut my lucky; for it all at once came upon me, that if I was caught there with the purse and papers about me, I should, of course, be thought to have killed the poor gentleman. Besides, I had an uncommon fancy to the purse, and also to the gold watch, the chain of which rattled temptingly ag'in my fingers. I tried to secure the chain as well as the watch, but I couldn't get it unfastened; and as I saw several lights coming near from the mansion, I knew I hadn't a moment to lose. So I snapped the watch off from the chain, and bolted as quickly as I could with what I had got. Lucky was it I bolted when I did. I'd bare time to get clear off when I see some one come up to the dead man, and kneel down by the side of him, and——"

But here a cough seized the speaker, and he fell back upon his pillow, exhausted.

"He is not dead, is he?" whispered Lee, anxiously.

"No," replied the surgeon, with an equally anxious eye. "I will give him a stimulant which will support him a little while longer, and then really I must insist that you leave him to me and quietness. Nothing but repose can do him any good. I have extracted the ball, which had fortunately been turned aside by striking one of his ribs; so that is one mercy."

The draught speedily revived the wounded man sufficiently to enable him to continue in the difficult wheezing tone with which he had spoken throughout.

"I lost no time, no more nor I could help in hiding up the watch and the money in the ground, by the side of my own cottage, and then, when I thought I'd got all straight and secure, I just quietly went back to the place where I had come from, and there I found a lot o' people with torches and lamps, and stretchers, and making a fuss and a-skurrying about, all in confusion and uproar; and I mixed in among the rest, without exciting any suspicion at all."

"In course, Sir Walter, you know all about the verdic o' the jury and so on. What puzzled 'em was the pistols a-lying by the side o' Sir William, just as he had left 'em. They didn't think he had killed himself, because, you see, somebody, which was me, had been stealing his watch and money. When you came into the property I had no call to fetch 'em out from their hiding-place; for

on the whole, Sir Walter, you used to stump up pretty liberal to keep me quiet, you know, and so I always was flush o' blunt. Well, when you offered to pay me to go to Ameriky, I went. At Liverpool, as I was a-going, I went under a pretended name. I took yours, Sir Walter, because it was as good as any other for what I knew; and so that I might get rid of that there watch with safety, I entrusted it to the woman of the house where I was a-lodging, and she got rid of it, but not for half the money the ticker was really worth.

As soon as I had got on so far, I was glad to put the sea between me and England, that I certainly were, as I thought perhaps, that if ever that blessed ticker should ever turn up as being Sir William's, I might get into a jolly mess with it, and so—ugh! ugh!—but I think, Sir Walter, I've told you all I can say to put me straight with the world, and so I hope you'll forget all injuries, for I feel precious weak, and I don't know whether I shall ever pull over this here, so I think, Sir Walter, I won't talk any more now; but you'll find Sir William's letter at my crib. Will Sparks, the beggar! knows the shop, and I'll try and get a little quiet sleep. I may get round, so the doctor says, and if I do, I'll try and lead a better life; and if I don't, why I don't know as it makes much difference, Sir Walter; only if the Lord 'ud overlook what I've done wrong, I'm sure I should feel very grateful to him, and I hope he will: ugh!—ugh!

A fit of coughing violently agitated the wounded man, and he sank back upon his pillow—his eyes closed.

Wetherby, who with the lieutenant, had quietly come into the room towards the end of this narration, thought he was dead; in such profound rest did he appear to be. But the doctor whispered that he only slept, and earnestly enjoined the gentlemen to leave the room.

This they, without a word, complied with.

"We have had the revelation of two mysteries to-day, which I for one, had very little expected, though much I longed for," said Wetherby to Lee.

"Perhaps we may elucidate some more by-and-bye," Lee returned.

"What, with your uncle's manuscript?"

"Yes; who can tell?"

Dear reader, two of the three great mysteries of the book are indeed cleared up. In order to close its pages quickly, let us now deal with the third.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE EXPEDITION TO ROTHERHITHE.

"My dear George," said Lee presently, in reply to a remark of Mr. Wetherby ; " I am as anxious to see this manuscript as anyone ; but how on earth are we to get at it, until we can learn from Shaw where it is to be found ? "

" Excuse me, Sir Walter, but if you remember, sir, he said it was at his home," suggested Sergeant Browne.

" Why not go thither at all risks," said Dent, " and try if the thing cannot be found. It will be useless, I fear, to wait for further information from Shaw. "

This proposal was, after a brief discussion, acceded to, and during which the sergeant graciously promised to lend his private or professional aid in the furtherance of his patron's designs. And, indeed, it may be here said parenthetically, that it was well they came to this decision, inasmuch as when Tom Shaw awoke from his sleep a few hours afterwards, it was only to be a prey to a violent outbreak of fever, which in his present condition was highly critical, and required all the skill of Dr. M'Fergus, who, to his credit it must be said, was most unremitting in his attentions.

When the gentlemen returned to the parlour where the ladies were anxiously expecting them, the day had long since dawned, and the Rector had to give a short though accurate account of the deposition made by Tom Shaw, for the benefit of his wife and daughter.

Mrs. Evelyn was exceedingly curious to know whether the unhappy creature had confessed to the murder of poor dear Sir William ; and was, I think, rather disappointed when she found that he had not. But when she was informed that according to the testimony of Shaw, her respected and religiously disposed friend and patron had put an end to his own life by his own hand, she was filled with horror and dismay, and was inclined to turn sceptic upon the matter outright.

And then the discussion as to attempting the immediate recovery of the manuscript left behind by the suicide again crept up. The only difficulty as to its execution that very morning was the fact that no one knew where Shaw had resided. And Dr. M'Fergus informed them that there was not the slightest prospect of gleaning anything further from the wounded man (who was then enjoying a refreshing sleep) and who he insisted should not be disturbed with any further inquiries, even if he were capable of understanding them when he awoke from it. Fortunately, however, George Wetherby recollected that Will Sparks knew the address, inasmuch as he had

been to the house, and Mr. Sparks (who was snoring soundly in an arm chair in the kitchen) was accordingly summoned to the conclave.

It appeared that Shaw had taken up his abode since his arrival in London, at a little breakdown house near the Blue Anchor-road, Rotherhithe. And to this charming locality it was speedily arranged the whole lot of them should proceed early in the morning, being headed, or rather conducted thither by Will. And as nothing further could be done in this matter just then, and a little repose being desirable, it was agreed that a few hours should be allowed for that purpose before they went further on their new expedition.

Sergeant Browne, to whom sleep or even food did not seem necessary—though the latter was unquestionably the most desirable, especially when there was anything good to wash it down—did not, however, lose a minute in posting off by the express train, which departed at five a.m., in order to make his report at Scotland-yard, and so forth; all of which proceedings, not being a detective officer myself, I know but very little about.

Lee, however, arranged for the sergeant to meet him and the three gentlemen who were to accompany him, at the London-bridge terminus at eleven o'clock.

The brief sleep that was allowed proved very refreshing, and after a late breakfast, Sir Walter Lee, Mr. Evelyn, George Wetherby, Dent, and Will Sparks, started off on their expedition to town.

Sergeant Browne was punctual to his appointment, and was armed with the proper authority to make the necessary search. Accompanied by him they turned down Tooley-street; waded through Bermondsey, and soon got to the Blue Anchor-road, which was grim and dirty with the factories—that of Messrs. Frost's famous ropery being prominent amongst the rest—which comprised, with their tall smoking chimnies, the chief feature of that deplorable part of the world.

Will Sparks proved himself an able conductor, and marching by the side of the sergeant, who seemed to take considerable interest in him, and to patronise him hugely, he led the way through a series of labyrinths, intricate and bewildering to anybody but those favoured persons who knew them well.

The house was a little dismal-looking one enough, with wooden shutters that had got no further than their first coating of grey paint upon them, and this even was now almost wholly eaten away by time, which had also played sad havoc with the rusty old things they hung upon.

There was a little yard before the house, in which piles of cinders, oyster shells, and various filth, had long been accumulating.

The street-door, which was of the same muddy-looking colour as the shutters—only that the lower part was almost black where the children had been rubbing their dirty hands upon it; or beating dents into it with stones and rounder-sticks; the door, I say, had no number upon it, though there was the place still faintly visible where the number once had been.

"A dirty knitted cotton blind was in the lower window, and sticky-looking wax fruit (representing half a very rosy apple, and two green pears besides) was perceptible through it.

Will Sparks and the sergeant went first by themselves up to the door of this uninviting habitation, and lifting the shaking lion's head, delivered a postman's modest rap. Their first summons was unattended. They repeated the knock louder than before, and this time the application produced more effect. The window was thrown open, and a woman's head in curl papers thrust forth.

"Well," said the head, "what do you want?"

Sparks said he wanted Mr. Shaw.

"He isn't at home, then," the woman somewhat shortly replied.

"Oh," returned Will, as if much disappointed. For he feared he might have some difficulty in getting the woman to open the door,

"Any message for him?" said the head.

"Why, yes; we have a letter for him, my good woman, if you'll be so good as to come down and take it for him," interrupted Sergeant Browne, persuasively.

The woman seemed to hesitate; and then withdrawing her head, closed the window, and presently came to the door; and having fumbled about at the chain, which had been put up for security, opened the door a very little way. Mr. Browne inserted his foot between the door and the threshold, so that the former could not be again closed; and then informing her that he was an officer of the detective police, he very firmly intimated to her the nature of the business which had brought him there—namely, to search the room which had lately been in the occupation of Shaw.

The woman instantly became very civil and even cringing, and offered to lead the way. Meanwhile, the other gentlemen who had waited at the corner of the street, now rejoined them, and the whole party entered the house together. The stairs were dark and creaked at every step that fell upon them. On the second floor our visitors entered a dark and dirty room, the door of which they had found locked; but this obstacle was quickly overcome by the sergeant applying his foot to the panels and pushing it open by main force.

"Pish! this is suffocating," said Dent. "I will wait outside

in the fresh air ; unless, indeed, I can be of any aid, which I do not see that I can."

"And I will keep you company," added the Rector ; "I think so many of us are only in the way."

"Whereupon these two gentlemen went downstairs, and waited in the street, while the others went on to make the search.

The first thing to be done was to obtain a little more light. The place was involved in misty obscurity, that rendered all discovery under the present condition perfectly hopeless.

The window seemed to be unused to the process of opening, for it stuck firm and fast ; and it was not until after repeated exertion, and until one or two of the panes patched up with putty and paper had been broken, that they succeeded in opening it at all. The gleam of sunshine which then burst in was by the contrast perfectly puzzling, and revealed all the dinginess and dirtiness of the room and its contents to the best, or perhaps, I should say, to the very worst advantage.

There was not much furniture in the place. An old, break-down tent-bedstead, with a variegated patchwork quilt ; a deal table, with a basin and a jug of water, having the handle broken off ; also a dirty mahogany table, with the flap off one of its hinges, and a tall, old-fashioned chest of drawers, with brass handles, that chinked and clattered at every step that was taken across the floor. These were the principal contents of the room.

"We shall not be long in making our search, at any rate," said George Wetherby, shrugging his shoulders, disdainfully.

"We must search until we find what we seek ; and that, gentlemen, mainly depends upon where he has put it," the sergeant returned, quietly, and beginning to open the drawers, and to turn over their contents. At first their efforts were attended with no satisfactory results. The chest of drawers was crammed full of dirty garments—coats, trousers, navvy's boots, and so forth ; while one drawer was devoted exclusively to a heap of periodicals, such as "Reynolds' Miscellany," and old newspapers of a long anterior date. The cupboard, which emitted a faint and disagreeable odour, seemed to have been used as a sort of pantry, and the lower compartment for storing coals and chumps of firewood. In vain did the indefatigable sergeant poke about in every conceivable direction, and flash his lantern in every chink and cranny in the room. Not a thing like a manuscript was anywhere to be found ; until, at last, Will Sparks, who had not been idle, happened to discover a small drawer in the shaky old mahogany table, which, when it was found, in a corner, astonished them not a little that they had not discovered it before. In this drawer, amongst a lot of other papers, written and printed, of the former of which the sergeant took imme-

diate possession—amongst these papers, I say, was a scroll that had been sealed, but the seals of which had been broken.

“Ah! this looks something like our Golden Fleece!” cried Wetherby, seizing upon this scroll with avidity.

“Let me look!” said Lee, in agitation.

“*N'est pas?*” said George.

“Yes, this is indeed my poor uncle's handwriting!”

“Then, gentlemen,” said the sergeant, suggestively drawing his hand across his lips, “as I don't see anything else hereabouts, we can now leave, if you please, and go somewhere else, where you can read this here document, gentlemen, comfortable and quiet.”

This proposal was acceded to; and if the artful sergeant intended his remark as a gentle hint that his search had made him thirsty, and that a draught of half-and-half or a glass of grog would not be considered objectionable, his *ruse* succeeded admirably; for Sir Walter himself proposed, that while the manuscript was being read in some snug little public parlour, his friends should be so regaled. As, however, they were about to leave the room, the sergeant being particularly anxious to get away, Mr. George Wetherby felt a gentle tug at his sleeve, and turning round hastily, he perceived that Will Sparks was at his side, holding something knowingly in his hand, and making pantomimic gestures indicative of satisfaction, secrecy, and delight.

“The brooch!—the picture with the man's face!—hooray!” he cried, in a joyous whisper, waving the long-desired trinket above his head.

“Where—where did you find it?” ejaculated Wetherby, breathlessly.

“In the drawer, along with the papers.”

“What is that you have there, Mr. Sparks?” demanded Mr. Browne, insinuatingly; for the gesticulation of Will had not been lost on that sharp-eyed official.

“Never you mind what it is, Mr. Sergeant!” rejoined Will, attempting to conceal it.

“Anything belonging to Shaw, Mr. Sparks. Really, my friend——”

“No! dash my whiskers, Sergeant, it belongs to me; or, rather,” added Will, scratching his chin doubtfully, “if it doesn't belong to me, it certainly don't to him, the beggar!”

“But give it me, man, and let me look at it!” exclaimed George, snatching it impatiently from the other's hand.

And then, as Wetherby at last actually held this brooch within his hands—his hands which shook with nervousness—as his eyes scanned the portrait he had so long been so anxious to behold, the

lines of the face seemed to dance before him. He had half expected to behold a countenance that was familiar to him. It was the face of a handsome though middle-aged man, of dusky complexion. There was, indeed, something about that face that was familiar to the young man, yet, for the moment, he could not positively distinguish what that something was. While he was gazing at the brooch, almost as though he were fixed in a trance, Sir Walter Lee came up, and peered over over his shoulder.

"How—where in the name of all that is wonderful, did you get that?" he said, in a flurried whisper.

Wetherby stated, in a few words, that Shaw had stolen it from Sparks, and briefly explained, further, that it had belonged to his poor cousin, who had died.

"Strange—passing strange!" muttered Lee, gazing at the portrait fixedly.

"Do you know this face?" demanded George, quickly.

"Know it? Of course I do, my dear fellow! Don't you?"

"No! How should I?"

"You don't?"

"No! In heaven's name whose is it?"

Wetherby spoke in a rapid tone, and bent eagerly forward to catch the reply. The reply came, and with evident surprise on the part of Lee.

"What, is it possible, my dear Wetherby, that you do not know? *My uncle!*"

The room seemed to swim round and round, and George Wetherby had to clutch at the astonished baronet to prevent himself from falling to the ground. Yes, Wetherby had seen the late baronet, upon two or three occasions, some years ago; and when young Lee mentioned him, the recollection was complete.

The miniature portrait was indeed that of Sir William Lee!

CHAPTER LV.

THE MANUSCRIPT.

A PLACE suitable to their object was speedily found, for there were few parts of London, however obscure, with which Sergeant Browne was not well acquainted. It was a quiet and respectable little public-house, where they found, upon inquiry, they could have a room to themselves. Leaving the sergeant and Will Sparks to flirt with the buxom young damsel who officiated behind the bar, the other gentlemen walked upstairs, and being supplied with cigars and such beverage as they severally chose, Sir Walter Lee, without further preface or ceremony, opened the document, and read aloud—

SIR WILLIAM'S MANUSCRIPT.

"I, William Lee, am alone in the solitude of my chamber as I write these lines; and I know that when these words are scanned by mortal eye, I shall be a living creature in this world no more. I have neither wife nor family, and I leave no one behind to mourn my fate, or to shed a tear at the mention of my name, save only my dear nephew, Walter, who may, perhaps, derive some profit from the perusal of these pages, which will briefly record the history of my life. To him I bequeath them, and earnestly exhort him to be warned of the quicksands into which I, alas, have fallen; reminding him, at the same time, that I have no reason whatever to disguise or garble the truth.

"I have often sought to admonish him when I have seen him plunging headlong into the vices and pleasures of London life. These things, to be indulged in, require an old head to direct them; and, alas! when wisdom comes such pleasures can no longer allure. I have held up to him precepts of prudence and morality. He little knew how much I was a living example of the dangers and miseries I recited, nor had I the moral courage to be frank. But now, I repeat, I am no longer of this world. I go to render my account to the God whose laws I have outraged.

"I began life as a 'fast man' at Oxford. I was rusticated on account of a little scandal that reached the ears of the authorities, and which they did not feel disposed to suffer to pass without making, for the honour of the university, an example of the delinquent. I bore this disgrace with admirable composure. I indeed, viewed it rather with satisfaction; for it rendered me free. I went up to the metropolis, and lived the ricketty and devil-may-care career which it was probable a young fellow of two and twenty, with a fortune of four thousand a year in his own control, was likely to lead. I got quickly into the habit of spending double my income—an ingenious process, which, even to the merest tyro in mathematics, could not but lead to my speedily getting into debt.

"Slice after slice of the property which was not entailed was either sold by me, or deeply mortgaged; and upon the security of the rents of that portion which was so, money was obtained upon any terms it pleased the usurers to grant it. My passions were strong, and I had never learnt to restrain them. They had become therefore my master, and must be gratified at any cost.

"But even in the wildest and most vicious periods of my life, I can appeal to my own conscience, and I can appeal also to you, my dear boy, that I have not neglected you. I have ever endeavoured to fulfil the part of a father to you; and have loved you and cherished you with an affection that could not be more sincere if you had

been my own son. This is the one green spot of kindness and purity that I can look back upon in my life without regret, without remorse, without shame. But I found that, however pleasant it might be to live a thriftless life of extravagance and waste, there was a reverse to the picture that was not so agreeable. I found myself sinking day by day deeper and deeper into debt, discredit, and difficulties; besides, I soon discovered that I was held in such opprobrium, that no respectable family cared for the honour of my acquaintance. Virtuous girls looked upon me as a sad rascal, whom they would like to marry very well; no doubt, if they could only hook their fish, and bring me safely to land; but as one that their mammas would warn, at the same time as they praised me for being a 'good chance,' that I was nevertheless, a dangerous sort of a fish to tackle, and that, on the whole, it would be well for them to be rather shy of my eligible society.

"Once or twice I made an effort at retrenchment in my expenditure. Once or twice also I made an effort to mix in the respectable society of Waverney; and I failed alike in both. At last I became satisfied that if I did *not* succeed in the former wish I should be a ruined man; besides, I now began to grow weary of my mad career, and, in short, to become *blaze*; so that the effort was not so great to relinquish the foolish course of dog-fighting, racing, and so forth, as I had found it when I had made the attempt at former times. I was anxious also to be able to leave you, my nephew, with something more than a barren title. I was not a man without resolution, though my passions had obtained such a sad sway over my actions: and now, when I had really made up my mind, I acted with promptitude and determination.

"I sold off my horses, dogs, and carriages: cashiered my French valet, who knew too many of my secrets; bade adieu to my fast friends in the metropolis; came to my unlucky estate (or rather the remains of it) at Waverney; turned very religious—of High Church proclivities, of course; took an interest in Conservative politics, and held strong opinions in regard to the franchise and the game-laws: and, in fact, became, at once and for ever, an exceedingly respectable man. I practised a rigid parsimony; saving everything I could, curtailing my expenses in every possible way; attended church with regularity, and gave away small sums in charity ostentatiously, and had a moral maxim or a verse from Scripture upon my tongue's end for every occasion.

In this manner I gradually arose in the good opinion of my neighbours, until at last I regained the footing to which the prestige of my family entitled me; and I became one of the foremost men and the most looked-up to in these parts. Meanwhile, as I was increasing my respectability, I was increasing also my wealth.

Instead of living now beyond my means, I paid, year by year, no less a sum than three thousand pounds off the liabilities which encumbered my estates; and this while I was making an annual allowance of five hundred to you.

"My reformation, however, was not so complete as my worthy friends imagined. Sporting and gambling I had indeed abandoned, but my passions had not been quenched. I managed matters, however, quietly, and things which would have caused many of my friends to open their eyes with wonder and astonishment, if they had only had the gumption to perceive them, were carried on by me, quietly and unknown, under their very eyes.

"I have before had occasion to speak of Mr. Evelyn. I confess that I write with remorse and the bitterest regret. Often and often I received tokens of the purest kindness at that gentleman's hands. I have never known him to act otherwise than as the noblest and most generous thoughts could prompt. I owe him the deepest debt of gratitude, and have repaid him by basely betraying the sanctity of his home.

"I must not anticipate, however. From the time I had begun to save, saving had become with me a passion, or, I should say, perhaps, that the desire of relieving my paternal estate from its encumbrance, and of amassing a fair fortune, to leave my dear nephew with the same, had become such. With the view of furthering this scheme, I had for some time been paying my addresses, in secret, to a wealthy widow, some years my senior, and who dwelt a few miles from Waverney. The vanity of this worthy lady was touched by my flattering attentions, and there appeared a prospect that my suit might be brought to a favourable termination whenever I thought proper to close in with her in earnest. Yet I never loved this poor woman. Love!—love was out of the question. I could have married her for her wealth, as I could have married her if she had been twice as old and ten times plainer-featured than she was. Unhappily for me, and for others better, a thousand times better than me—I at this time formed an attachment—the purest I have ever formed, but one which, owing to my uncontrollable passions, has been the ruin of her who was the innocent cause, and of me, the basest of mankind, who have taken advantage of her innocence and trusting love.

"Emma Evelyn was the loveliest of womankind—a girl, rather, just budding into womanhood. I was often over at the Rectory, and was there continually under the spell of her various and irresistible charms. Poor girl! she looked upon me as something noble, generous, and to be trusted. Did not her parents think me so? Did not all Waverney think me so now? What wonder, then, that she should think as they thought!

“I believe Mr. Evelyn regarded me almost as a brother——”

A groan burst from the lips of the Rector at this portion of the manuscript. Sir Walter Lee glanced up, and gave him a sympathising look, but, without making any remark, he went on reading as follows :—

“I—villain that I was!—took advantage of my position. I was many years older than the poor girl, but I was still handsome and well versed in all the alluring arts which please; and—why should I descant upon what I cannot contemplate, but with remorse? In short, I promised her marriage; and, in an evil hour, I seduced her. I could have married her; but was I not racked by my schemes of increasing my fortune by a marriage with a woman whom I did not love? Day by day, I was almost driven into a frenzy by my anxieties and passions. I schemed and plotted, but I could not resolve to take the step which in honour I was bound to take.

“At length the time arrived when concealment was no longer possible. Discovery was to me utter ruin. I worked upon the poor girl’s shame, her love for me—everything that placed her in my power. She fled with me to London, and there, under the assumed name of Langton (which was, indeed, the name of my poor mother before her marriage), we lived as man and wife, I spending much time in her society—all, indeed, that I did not pass, for the sake of appearances, here.

“A child was the result of this connection; and this was the link that bound the victim to obey my will. Soon she grew impatient at the continued delays which I made in fulfilling my promise of marrying her. She became restless, and filled with remorse and grief. She was continually reproaching me with my perfidy; and then she would suddenly change her reproaches into tears and prayers. I resisted them, and prosecuted meanwhile my suit with the wealthy widow, and, in fact, so nearly was the latter scheme brought to a favourable termination, that the day of our wedding was actually named.

“By some means or other—most probably through some papers I had in my possession—the wretched girl I had betrayed, and whom I had so steadfastly determined not to right, though whom, as Heaven knows, I loved so much more tenderly than any other being in the world—by some means or another, I say, she became aware of my doubly perfidy, and that while I was continually promising I would soon marry her, though as continually inventing excuses to postpone the day, I was in reality preparing to marry an ugly old beldame for her money.

"Never shall I, never can I forget the expression of her face that day when she discovered my villany. In vain I vowed and protested my innocence, swore and threatened, entreated and besought her forgiveness. It was all in vain. That day, too, the child, which had been ailing, died. That night, during my temporary absence at Waverney, Emma left the home I had provided for her. Where she went, or what became of her, God alone knows. I was distracted with anguish when I found she had gone. Those only who have been accursed with such passions as mine can know my utter despair. I advertised for her in the *Times*, entreating her to return to me, and signed the advertisement with my initials."

The Rector and George Wetherby here exchanged significant glances.

"This advertisement, however, produced no result, but to confirm my despair. I advertised again with the same effect, and employed a detective officer to endeavour to trace her, but all my efforts were bootless. All that I could ascertain by means of the latter was that the wretched girl had been disposing of the trinkets I had given her, sometimes selling them, sometimes getting cash advanced upon them from pawnbrokers, sometimes in her own name, sometimes in that of Langton, by which, as I have already remarked, we were known.

"I returned to the solitude of Waverney Court a prey to emotions and to passions which few will be able to comprehend. I was brought daily into intercourse with the father of her I had so basely injured, and was compelled to play the hypocrite to conceal my crime.

"By a strange perversity of human nature, now that I had nothing to hinder my marriage with the foolish old woman whose wealth I could at any time make my own, my very nature rebelled against her, and I felt as though I would rather encounter abject poverty than become affluent by means of the scheme I had prepared with such cunning and at such cost. Whether I grew neglectful I scarcely know, but the old woman soon after married a young, though impoverished viscount, who had been courting her as sedulously as I had, and who had not failed to take advantage of my remissness. I scarcely felt this disappointment at all. I simply dismissed the ancient dame from my mind with a curse. But the recollection of the girl I had loved so tenderly, but had betrayed so foully, was not so to be disposed of. Her fate haunted me night and day. It haunts me now as I write these final lines. It is evening, and I can fancy that her soft sorrowful face is looking at me reproachfully through the shadows of the night that are falling.

"My dear boy, you will think me scarcely a proper man to preach you a sermon; and yet, if I am not, who is? Who can better warn you of the horrors of a guilty conscience than he who has experienced the pangs of bitter remorse?"

"Ah, the misery of a guilty passion! Death is preferable. Death! I feel that I would give my soul to look upon that girl once more!"

"I am distracted. You, my dear boy, will return to the home of your ancestors this night. I should be the one to bid you welcome, and yet I dread your coming. I dread to encounter the faces of my fellow-creatures. I do not know what strange impulse is upon me this evening. I have written this warning, yet I scarcely know why I have done so. My intentions are vague and undetermined. Sometimes the resolution to put an end to my miserable life comes upon me. I feel something of this to-night."

"I have almost made up my mind to the desperate deed. Why should I fear death when life is unendurable? I send this warning to you, my dear boy. Pray for me, Walter, sometimes, and think of me often. Be warned by me also."

"WILLIAM LEE."

Sir Walter closed the manuscript, and then a solemn pause ensued. The good old Rector was the first to speak. He rose to his feet, and his voice trembled as the few words fell from his lips.

"Unhappy man!" he said, solemnly. "His crime was great, and his punishment great also. Let us forgive, as we expect to be forgiven. He was the cause of the bitterest sorrow I have ever known. My home was happy ere he entered it, but he has bereft me of my darling child; and made those hairs which were then black turn grey. But I bear him no malice. No, no; may God forgive him as freely as I do!"

Then the old man went down on his knees, and prayed in simple words that the sins of his enemy might be erased from the dread record in the leaves of the Great Book. The rest spoke in hushed whispers. There could be no doubt now to George Wetherby that the ring which he had redeemed from the pawnbroker in Tottenham-court-road must have originally belonged to Sir William Lee, and that Emma had pledged it in her necessity.

The mystery of the advertisement in the *Times*, and of the name Langton, in which the opal ring was pawned, was thus cleared up, and great though the shock had been to Mr. Evelyn to learn that the betrayer of his child had been the man in whom he had placed such implicit faith, and had regarded with such friendship and esteem, and whom he had looked upon as the soul of honour,

yet it must be confessed that the clearance of all mystery was, in some measure, a relief to him, since he was no longer harassed with doubts and anxiety.

As for George Wetherby and Lieutenant Dent, it is, perhaps, needless to say that the revelations of the last few hours had eased their minds from many horrible apprehensions, which no one had ever for a moment suspected to haunt them.

And so their mission to Rotherhithe being crowned with such success, there remained nothing for them but to get back to Waverney as quickly as possible. Nor is there anything now, for the writer of this history, but to close up its pages with the same speed.

CHAPTER LVI.

BEING THE KEYSTONE TO THE STRUCTURE OF "WAVERNEY COURT."

AND now that the three chief mysteries, with all their attendant small mystifications, which it was the avowed object of this story to explain; now that these said mysteries have been cleared up—I trust to the satisfaction of everybody—the wisest course for the historian to pursue is, to close the pages of his history before any further mysteries of a deeper and subtler kind crop up, which he might not find so easy to dispose of satisfactorily, and which might, therefore, in the moment of his triumph, so perplex and dumbfounder him, as to leave him stamped a vaunting bungler, even unto posterity.

There is very little to be said. You see my hero and heroine are already married, and many of those troubles and vicissitudes which it is usual for such ladies and gentlemen to encounter before their matrimonial bliss at the end of the volume have been so far in accordance with the common course of rural life, that they have had to endure them after the bridal ceremony. Not that it is my intention to insinuate either that Sir Walter and Lady Lee had not a large amount of happiness and connubial bliss in store for them, or that as a general axiom the married state in real life is not endowed with its due proportion of sunny moments as well as shady ones; on the contrary, I am one who takes an easy view of life, and believe that every phase has its pleasures as well as its little pains, and that our joys and our sorrows are scattered pretty equally here and there.

At all events, if my hero and heroine prevent me the felicity of again entering into a description of orange-blossoms, ringing bells, lace dresses as fleecy and undulating and white as the driven snow, and so forth, seeing that a full description of the same has occurred in these pages once already,—there is no reason why I should not

enter into minute particulars of another wedding, which was solemnised afterwards at Waverney Church, at which wedding the Reverend Andrew Evelyn himself officiated, and Mr. George Wetherby and the black-eyed Flora Phillips performed the principal parts.

And in case those prudent gentlemen who view with such dread and horror all frugal marriages should be alarmed, lest Mr. Wetherby had to battle with the world with his pretty wife, and—well, we won't contemplate the possibility of a family yet awhile—by his side and serving as a dreadfully heavy olog to him, and only his two hundred a-year, which just enabled him in his bachelor days, to keep the wolf from the door,—lest this should be the case, I say, I will relieve their minds of all such apprehensions without delay. Mr. Wetherby had, in the first place, his own two hundred per annum; his blushing bride brought him a cheque for two thousand pounds, which that successful architect, her papa, had placed in her hands by way of dowry, immediately after the bridal ceremony. This sum being duly invested at five per centum upon the mortgage of property which her papa's friend, Mr. Barber, had been building, brought into the common stock one hundred pounds per annum more. And Sir Walter Lee, perceiving that George's inclination did not lie in the legal direction, kindly used his influence and procured a Government appointment for him, with very little to do, which brought him in two hundred a-year more. And, look you, if a young married couple cannot manage things very comfortably upon five hundred a-year, I would recommend them to turn novel writers for a little time, and try and live upon what they can earn by that; and if that doesn't reconcile them to their fate, I don't know what will.

Mr. Will Sparks was amply rewarded, both by Wetherby and Sir Walter Lee, for all his labours and ingenious contrivances in their behalf. Indeed, it was not long before he gave over clothes-line making for ever (except when he indulged in it by way of amusement), and accepted the very comfortable office of bailiff upon the Waverney-Court estate, which Sir Walter offered him.

Master Bob Sparks, at the same time, put off his charity suit, and donned a handsome costume made expressly for him by a fashionable tailor; which costume was of brilliant green, and adorned by a greater number of gilt buttons than that to which he had been accustomed. In common parlance, he became a page, and distinguished himself in that capacity, earning the confidence and regard of his present mistress, Lady Lee.

Fortunately, perhaps for all parties, Tom Shaw ultimately recovered, and with his friend Ned, was convicted of the burglary and paid the penalty thereof according to the law.

Lieutenant Dent, during his fréquent visits to his friend George Wetherby, at the latter's residence near St. John's Wood, was occasionally brought into the society of the elder Miss Phillips. Thus it came to pass that the regiment to which Dent belonged being ordered to embark for India, and that gentleman thinking a companion to cheer him during his residence in that sultry climate would be desirable, asked Miss Clara to accompany him thither; and she, being rather anxious for a husband, and the lieutenant being rather handsome, and by no means a bad chance;—in short, she agreed to go with him, and—well, to be brief—she went.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones (for why should I not speak of my humble friends as well as my more distinguished and aristocratic ones) left his "Little T Chest" rather suddenly. The fact was, that being detected in selling certain comestibles with false weights and short measure, Obadiah got into trouble; and a little village not many miles from London, having a chapel and a chandler's shop to let therein, and being blessed with a simple and credulous population,—Obadiah and his wife, with the Reverend Zacharias Tinglebottom and his wife, emigrated thither; the former taking the shop, and the latter the chapel,—an event which resulted in the speedy and extensive spread of that simple and edifying religion known in the census-paper as the Tinglebottonian New Lights.

‡ But I must not leave the words unsaid which bid adieu to the old Rectory of Waverney and to them who dwell there. Time has dealt gently with the Rector and his wife; for look you, dear reader, that hard old fellow, with his scythe and ever-running hour-glass, does not pass by a man for three-score years, and leave no marks behind to show he's been there. But with some the old fellow bears more kindly than with others, and these are they who use him well; who keep up a genial fire—if I may be metaphorical—within their breasts, that drives away the bitter cold and frost of passing years; who bid the old gentleman a kindly welcome to their homes, and tell him to set up his glass and scythe in the chimney-corner, and tarry with them in a friendly way—for such as these old Father Time appears to have a liking. His own grey beard seems to glisten with his genial smile, and the icicles upon it to melt, anointing them who have touched his heart. With them he lingers willingly; and threescore years and ten slip by, and yet the old fellow cares not to shoulder his scythe again, and quit such goodly company. Sometimes indeed, as records show, a hundred years have gone, and yet the ancient father has rested with the favoured host, a not-unwilling guest.

May such a destiny be that of Mr. Evelyn and his wife. Indeed, to see the health that shines upon the cheeks of this kindly pair, there seems some reason for the hope. In that old Rectory

parlour, age and childhood often came together. For there, sometimes, a little girl and boy, neither scarcely able to run alone, are seen romping upon the Rector's knee ; and he seems to enjoy their gambols as much as they do ; and well does he appear to appreciate the meaning of the words "grand-papa," which they lisp fondly in their childish prattle as they play.

These are Grace's children. Little flowers, they are, in the garden of Grace's life, which have their full share of all a mother's gentle love and ever-watchful care.

Over the picture of their happy home I draw a veil. Time deals well with her also ; and though a mother, he has not reft her of her girlish beauty and its fresh bloom. For what cosmetique, gentle reader, is there purchasable in Regent-street or elsewhere in the world of fashionable life like happiness ?

OUR VILLAGE

A SUNSET SKETCH

I LINGERED on the bridge of stone,
 And watched the glassy river glide
 Under the arches, overgrown
 With mosses and ivy on either side.

The sunset was gleaming in purple and gold,
 And its splendour fell on the fields of corn;
 And it tinted the bridge, and the silent wold,
 And the quaint old village where I was born.

It painted the temple, old and grey,
 And the teaching tombs and the slanting limes,
 And the churchyard-path, whose hallowed way
 My feet have trodden a thousand times.

And it tinged the manse with its whitened wall,
 And the silver foam of the noisy mill,
 And the turretted roof of the lordly hall
 That nestled among the trees on the hill.

And it tinged the inn with its blazoned arms,
 As it waited the sound of the coachman's horn,
 And added a tint to the maypole's charms,
 In the quaint old village where I was born.

It gave the blacksmith a sweet embrace,
 And told him the toil of the day was o'er;
 And deepened the tint of his rosy face,
 As he leaned with his brawny arms on the door.

And it painted the cottage of Lucy Fell,
 A crazed, lone woman, wrinkled and worn,
 Whom once I knew as the blooming belle
 Of the quaint old village where I was born.

But Edwin, her lover, went over the sea—
 Went over the sea his living to earn;
 And she vowed a vow she would faithful be,
 And patiently tarry till his return.

Poor soul ! she has waited for many a year,
Though her lover was lost in a Biscay gale ;
And she anxiously listens his step to hear,
For she never believed the sad, sad tale !

And the sunset fell on the village school,
Where I learned to spell and knuckle at law ;
And the master ruled with a martial rule,
To keep his trembling ranks in awe.

And its glimmer painted the farmstead old,
With its herd of kine and ricks of grain ;
It tinted the porch with a streak of gold,
And flushed with crimson the window-pane.

But while I lingered, a voiceful knell
Tolled out the hour for toil to cease ;
’Twas the sound of the time-worn Curfew bell,
And all the village was hush’d in peace.

And I mused as I turned to my cottage home,
(Led by the light of the evening star),
“ My footsteps never shall yearn to roam
To cloud-capped cities and lands afar.

“ For dearer to me is the home of my birth,
With its peaceful temple and gable old,
Than all the teeming cities of earth,
Where millions are striving for favour and gold.”

“ O haunt of rustic bliss,” thought I,
“ My heart from thee shall never be torn ;
I have lived my life, and I hope to die,
In the quaint old village where I was born !”

J. C. T.

SCARLET RECOLLECTIONS

BY SEMPER VIGILANS, B.A.

PART II.—CHAPTER V.

BEDROOMS IN BALLYBRANNIGAN.

SCENE—my bedroom. *Dramatis personæ*—Grip and myself. Stage attitude—a recumbent one in both cases; Grip below the bed, myself above and upon it. Occupation—as before in both cases. slumber; Grip, however, keeping one ear up and open, ready for any alarm. Time—seven o'clock, on a bright sunshiny morning. Musical accompaniments—regular, deep, easy respirations from your humble servant, betokening calm healthy slumber (not snores, I protest! not even *baby* snores! Never was guilty of snores, big or little,—never could be!), sharp occasional growls from Grip, betokening what answers to nightmare in his species.

Time changes. 7.30 A.M.—Door opens. Head intruded cautiously. Body left on other side. Mouth belonging to head says, “Grip, Grip! all right, old boy”—(Necessary precaution before entering, Grip having an ugly habit of waking up suddenly and making a rush at legs.) Grip rouses himself, looks suspiciously at door, recognises face, comes out from underneath bed, stretches his fore legs, yawns, stretches hind legs, yawns again, gives a third stretch both fore and aft, and then wags his tail by way of good morning. It is my servant, come for boots, clothes, &c.

Lieutenant Tombs slumbers on. Servant gathers up the scattered wardrobe, arranges room, lays out clean shirt and uniform, fills bath, gives a general glance round to see if anything more be wanted, then makes up a bundle for brushing and polishing, and exit, closing door gently behind him, as velvet-footed as a cat. Grip, who has gravely watched proceedings, and wagged approval. goes out too, intent on his morning walk and bath. Silence and repose again.

8 A.M.—Mr. Tombs’s usual hour for rising. That gallant officer half awakes from force of habit, turns over, gives a grunt, and is about to awaken thoroughly, when—happy thought!—his half-unconscious mind dimly remembers that he is in for no duty, no inspections, no parades, no orderly-room work for a whole twenty-four hours. Another grunt of satisfaction, and the gallant warrior composes himself for a second allowance of sleep. Silence and peace again.

8.10 A.M.—Knock at the door! No answer. Knock, knock—a grunt from the bed. Knock, knock, knock! Voice from bed, half asleep and low, “What is the matter? Who is it?” (Grunt). Knock, knock, knock, knock!—Injured being sits up in bed and shouts, “Come in, and stop that row, will you!” Door opens, and in stalks an obedient orderly, stands erect at attention, raises hand to cap, and jerks out, “Major wishes to see you, sir, at his own quarters, when perfectly convenient.”

“Bother the major! It isn’t convenient. What possesses him to send in the middle of the night, like this? There, tell him I’ll come—all right—by-and-bye.” Exit orderly. “What’s in the wind now, I wonder? Bother and blow, and confound and hang, and confusticate all the majors in the universe!—and I was in such a nice sleep too! There (snuggling into pillows), let us try again! Wonder what he wants (another snuggle). Never mind. Time enough in an hour or two (snuggle number three). It can’t be duty, else wouldn’t have sent such a civil message. No good guessing—bore—nuisance—let a fellow sleep—conf—(Grunt, snuggle—sleep again).”

Silence once more.

8.20.—Hurried knock;—door bursts open—a frantic rush to bedside, and boisterous voice, like a small thunderclap:

“Tombs!—I say, Tombs!—Rouse up, old fellow!—Tombs!”

Stifled voice from bed-clothes—“Ugh! what?”

“Tombs!” (louder than before). “It is time to jump up. Getting on for nine,—do you hear? Hie, Rat, boy, here! Up!”

Sudden bound of terrier upon the raised part of the bedclothes. Naughty exclamation from underneath. “Can’t you let a fellow be, Singleton? What on earth do you want? Take that blessed dog away!” A vicious kick through the bed-clothes at poor Rat, who slopes.

“Hallo! Don’t excite yourself, old fellow! Here, Rat, did he *do*, then! Look here, Tombs, I want your servant for half-an-hour. My fellow has been and got into the guard-room,—drunk last night,—out till all hours,—doing, don’t know what. Anyhow, he has not been near me this morning, and everything in my room is at sixes and sevens.”

Voice from the bed—“Take him—take anything you like,—but do be off!”

“Oh, all right, I shall find him about the passage, I suppose. I say, Tombs, what does Dr. Watts say about the sluggard what some fellow heard complain—eh?”

Head drawn down under the bed-clothes. No answer. Exit Singleton, slamming door behind him and whistling. Growl from bed. Silence again.

8-30.—Knock again at door. Lieutenant Tombs sits up, forgets Christianity and good manners, and swears. Another submissive orderly—

“Adjutant desires——”

“That’ll do. Excused all duty: tell him so. Shut the door and be off!”

“Please, sir——”

“Will you go?”

“But the adjutant——”

“May go to Jerusalem! Cut—vanish—make yourself scarce!”

“Orders for the day—returns—adjutant—immediate!” The poor fellow retires, muttering, but obedient.

“I’ll lie till noon,” growls the indignant lieutenant. “Hallo! here’s another! I declare I’ll—oh, it’s Conroy!”

The door opens, and the servant appears, with clothes well brushed, and boots resplendent,—glides in cautiously and cat-like, as before, sees his master awake, and wishes “Good morning, sir!”

“Oh, Conroy, Mr. Singleton wants you! And look here, Conroy, just hand me a boot or two. I’ve been bothered past all bearing; and the next fellow who comes shall get—be quick, man! here is another of them! Now, Sprouts, what do you want?”

Sprouts looks eager and excited. “Oh, Tombs, please, can I speak to you for a few minutes?”

“Yes, at a decent hour; man; but not now. Have you got no more decency than to come magpie-ing before a fellow’s fairly awake?”

“But, Tombs, I really——”

“Hand me over a boot, Conroy—do you hear?—and don’t stand grinning, like a fool! Now, Sprouts, are you going?”

Sprouts, looking mournful—“I am really in earnest, Tombs——”

“So am I! Has anyone been bullying you? Send them to me at twelve, punctual, and I’ll thrash them for you—(be it known to the reader that I was Sprouts’s champion on occasions)—till then, make yourself scarce. You won’t? Put him out, Conroy, and be off after him!”

Exit Sprouts, “Aw! aw!”-ing, and “I declare it is too bad!”-ing, and in a huff. Exit Conroy after him. Once more silence.

And so, on the very morning of all others when I had laid myself out for a luxurious, unbroken snooze, secure from interruption, safe from duty, sheltered by doctor’s order, an invalid still from the effects of that Sunday recorded in the last chapter,—on that very morning, I say, I was badgered and tormented in this manner! There was really so little to get up for at Ballybrannigan, and so

little to amuse yourself with when you ~~were~~ up, that I was always glad of any excuse for a morning nap. On this occasion I was really out of sorts. My cold had been the result of a thorough chill, and was accompanied with snudry rheumatic twinges in the shoulders and back ; and as the week before had been a heavy one for duty, I felt I had fairly earned some little luxury in the way of laziness.

There are a set of men in every mess who have a peculiar propensity for lounging into their friends' rooms at all times, in season and out of season, without regard to anyone's feeling but their own. Of course, it is natural enough for men who are living side by side in the same passage or block* to drop in upon one another without much ceremony ; but, as Solomon says, there is a time for everything under the sun ; and I confess myself, that, though as gregarious an animal as any of my species, I like sometimes to be alone, and to feel that I am tolerably safe from interruption. Now, out of our small community at Ballybrannigan we possessed two veritable " wandering Jews "—Singleton and Sprouts—who never could or would be alone themselves, and consequently had no idea that anybody else was differently constituted. In Singleton's case it was all well enough, for he could both talk well and knew when to stop. To be with somebody, provided he liked that somebody was all he wanted ; and if you were writing, or in a silent mood, he filled his pipe, took up *Bell's Life* or the *Field*, and was quietly happy for an hour. But Sprouts was a thorough nuisance. It was an essential part of his nature to chatter, and chatter he must and would. His tongue successfully solved the problem of perpetual motion. Indeed, his body followed suit. He was always in a fidget ; and as Nature had given him a long, ungainly body, with great sprawling legs and arms—something like a garden-spider—his presence in a room was not always safe or pleasant. There was one good thing—he babbled on, in one uniform, monotonous flow of words, without waiting for, or wanting, any answer, nor, indeed, for any other reason, I am fully persuaded, except for the pleasure of hearing himself talk. So it was sometimes possible to forget his existence, even when he was in full cry ; just as it is no unusual thing for a man to live, work, eat, drink, and go to sleep, day after day, quite unconscious of the continual noise in the street outside. Poor Sprouts ! you were obliged to be rude to him. He loved his own dear self so well that he fancied you must needs love it too, and he never knew when he was in the way. It was a thousand pities he had not joined head-quarters at once. Amongst a dozen youngsters, he would never have been alone ; but here, at Bally-

* "Block ;" i.e., a row of barrack buildings.

brannigan, most of us had settled down into quiet-going old fogies. The only other ensign in barracks was Perry, and he never met Sprouts except to chaff him, or assist Fortescue and Singleton in playing practical jokes upon the unlucky fledgling. Sprouts's distinguished father, the alderman, and no less distinguished mother, distantly related to Lord Rydrobyn, had duly sent him a whole waggon-load of furniture, preposterous for a sub. in a marching regiment. His room—for, of course, he had but one—was crowded with a lot of things which were destined, in a few months, to be sold, at a tithe of their value, to a local broker, and meanwhile to be knocked about and ill-used, as useless things in barracks always are. One-half of his quarters looked like an over-furnished drawing-room; the other like a lady's bedroom. Cruel was the treatment both the room and its owner received from my brother subs. They made the latter apple-pie beds. They strewed the sheets with bristles off his hairbrush, which pricked like so many needles. The shut all the available dogs in the barracks into his room after he had gone to sleep, including Nip, the bull-dog, who got coolly on to the bed by his side, and nearly threw him into a fit with terror. In fact, when Bullen, whose quarters were close by, came into the room, both to seek Nip and to stop the terrific concert which the other dogs were kicking up—and, by the way, was almost knocked down by the canine rush which ensued when the door opened—he found Sprouts nearly smothered under the bed-clothes, which he had drawn tight over his head, and trembling convulsively from fright; while Nip lay half upon him, with a look about his face which said as plainly as possible, "I don't like this sort of joke."

Perhaps the worst trick of all was, one evening after mess, when the contents of his wash-hand basin and lamp were mutually exchanged, the water being poured into the lamp, and the oil into the basin. Sprouts had been taking rather more than was good for him that night; indeed, a very little in his case was too much. He had talked against time—talked until Bullen and I got so wearied that we took ourselves off to smoke a cigar in the moonlight—talked until he could talk no longer, and fell fast asleep in his chair. I knew there was some mischief brewing, from the unusual fact of those three—Singleton, Perry, and Fortescue—sitting with him so long, and drawing him out, as they did, to talk of Lord Rydrobyn and the alderman; and when my cigar was smoked out, and the moonlight work grew chilly, I put my head into the mess-room, to see what was going on. Nothing very much, apparently. The mess-sergeant was waiting to shut up; Sprouts was fast asleep, with a maudlin smile upon his face; and Fortescue was giving him a beautiful black moustache, imperial, and whiskers with a burnt

cork. Singleton and Perry had vanished. As I afterwards found, they were interchanging the oil and water. I at once asked Fortescue to stop his nonsense, wake Sprouts, and send him to bed. He complied with a readiness somewhat unexpected, first, however, giving the moustache an artistic curl at the corners. The gallant ensign arose, yawned, gazed around in a hazy sort of way, shook us both by the hand in an affectionate manner, and marched off to his quarters, with a gait at once dignified and tottering. The mess-sergeant gave a sigh of relief, and commenced putting out the light. I went off to bed.

A quarter-of-an-hour afterwards, and just as I had got to the lower strata of my clothing, there arose a most unexpected din from the other end of the passage. A violent rush ; a fit of spluttering ; a sound as if somebody was sick ; then a crashing and banging at some one's door, accompanied by loud shouts and angry anathemas, addressed, so far as I could gather, to the person inside. I slipped on my trousers again, took a candle, and sallied out. At Singleton's door was Sprouts, still fully dressed, with his wash-hand basin in his hand, kicking furiously at the panels, in a way which threatened to split them at every kick, and foaming at the mouth with rage. Bullen was by his side before I could get up, and laying hold of him without any ceremony, pulled him some few feet from the door, asking him at the same time what he meant by his "drunken foolery," when suddenly I saw him let Sprouts go, as if he had been stung, and commence smelling at and wringing his hands, as though he had touched something particularly unpleasant. Sprouts, meanwhile, made at the door again. When I came up, I was fairly nonplussed. Sprouts's face, and neck, and hands, and mess-waistcoat—indeed, his whole person, more or less—were covered and glistening with lamp oil, as if he had done—what, indeed, he actually had—taken an oil bath. The fact was, he had vainly tried to light his lamp on entering his room—had, at last, managed a candle—then, seeing in the glass his coked and blackened countenance, and being heated with talk and whiskey, he had made a sudden plunge at his wash-hand basin. The glimmer of the candle was not over bright, and the washing apparatus stood in the shadow at the foot of the bed. Down ducked poor Sprouts into the basin—full of abomination, and up he rose, half-stified, hair, eyes, nose, and mouth full and running over with the unctuous compound. He caught up the basin, in his first transport of fury, and made off to Singleton's door, with the intention of giving one of his tormentors, at any rate, some slight return, but—poor beggar!—in another minute, and before I could interfere, the smell, and taste, and feeling of the oil were too much for him. He dropped the basin, which was broken to

fragments, and made an awful mess upon the floor, reeled against the wall, and became so deadly ill that both Bullen and I thought he would have turned himself fairly inside out before he had finished. We got him back into his room, making ourselves like greased Indians in the process, tore off his clothes, wiped and scrubbed and scraped his face, and gave him a copious dose of brandy from a private bottle which Bullen fortunately had by him. But what with whiskey, oil, sickness, brandy, and rage combined, Sprouts spent a dreadful night, and kept his bed all the next day. I must do the three perpetrators of this mischief the justice to say that they were very penitent for their too great success, and not only made all apologies to their victim, but actually refrained from tormenting him for a whole fortnight afterwards.

I was in some sort Sprouts's champion and protector from the very first. Not, I sincerely hope, that we had much in common, but he was so helpless and alone, and—whenever any notice at all was taken of him—he was chaffed and snubbed out of his life. He was grateful to me in his way, and showed it, I am sorry to say, by haunting my room at all times and seasons, until occasionally I grew savage, and fairly ordered him out. A little of him—alas! there was nothing little about him except his brain—went a very long way.

Thus it was I saw nothing very peculiar in his early visit on that aforesaid memorable morning; nor, for that matter, in Singleton's either. They both professed a liking for me in their way, and favoured me with their company without standing on any idle ceremony of invitation. But friendship before breakfast is a decided nuisance, and when for the fourth or fifth time I laid my head down upon the pillow and tried to get back the power to sleep—a difficult matter when you have been fairly aroused—it was in no amiable frame of mind, and a fixed determination to assault and do bodily harm to the next being who should attempt to enter.

Confound it!—I was just dropping off, after nearly half-an-hour wasted in vain endeavours, when knock, knock, knock went some one at the door once more.

"It's that villan Sprouts again—I know his knock!" I exclaimed. "He shall catch it this time, as sure as my name's Tombs!" and with that I scrambled out of bed, seized hold of a boot, and stood, regardless of bare legs, ready to receive him.

Knock, knock, knock!—sharper and louder than before.

"I'll see if I can't do something in the knocking line," was my only response, *sotto voce*.

The disturber of my peace grew impatient, and, after one more fierce knock, opened the door. I flung the boot straight at his head.

Oh, murder! Woe and desolation! Misery and confusion! Miserable being that I was,—I had pitched, with hand profane, a double-soled nail-studded boot at the head of my august commander, Major Beardwood!

Draw a veil of respectful sympathy over my feelings! They overcome me now, even after all these years, as I think of that awful moment. I must pause, perforce, and commence a fresh chapter; the reader, meanwhile, being pleased to imagine me in my one garment staring stupidly at the major; while the major, no less astounded, with his hat knocked off, and holding by the handle of the door to steady himself, looked quite as stupidly at me.

CHAPTER VI.

AND BONNETS.

I NEED not say that, so soon as I could find breath and words, I broke out into a volley of apologies and protestations of sorrow. In truth, there was good need. The major's hat was not only knocked off his head, but bulged in at the side, and his head itself had received a blow "sufficient to swear by," as the saying goes. Indeed, I expected it would be quite sufficient to set him swearing like a hundred troopers; but, whether it was the shock which had disturbed his faculties, or that he really pitied my confusion, he simply rubbed his head, picked up his hat, said something about "warm reception," motioned towards the bed (into which I scrambled again), and then sat down and cleared his throat vigorously. Altogether, his manner was odd and unlike himself.

What had he come for, not waiting for me to obey his summons? In mufti, too, at this hour of the morning!—and seraphically meek—more than meek—embarrassed and nervous! And this before a sub., whom he had bullied for three months, as though said sub. had been a galley slave! I could not make it out, and waited with some curiosity while my chief re-straightened his wounded hat, and rubbed it round and round upon his coat-sleeve, "ahem"-ing and "aha"-ing, all the time; fidgetting about on his chair, and looking down like a guilty schoolboy. It was so curious that I quite forgot myself, my costume, and my mal-apropos shot, and watched my visitor in much astonishment.

What had come over the man? Why couldn't he speak? I acted on my character of host, and offered a remark about the weather.

"Ahem—ah—yes!" It was a fine morning, my commander allowed, and then resumed his silence and hat-polishing together.

"And likely to remain fine if I was not mistaken."

"Yes, decidedly—ahem—aha—quite so!" he had said—thinking of it, he had been so pleased. These were not bad quarters of mine, the major was pleased to observe, after a pause—"ahem."

Glad to have struck an idea out of him, I assented. They were—very—

"And quite a pleasant look out, by Jove—ahem—ahav!"

Now, it was not the first time by any manner of means that the major had been in the room and seen the view, neither of which was in any way remarkable. Nor had he visited me to praise either the one or the other. Wondering whether he would comment next on the bed, or my classical attire, I gave another assent, and waited for what was coming.

Nothing, apparently. Catching at an idea, I began to apologise for not having obeyed the summons I received at 8.10 a.m.; explaining that I was not quite well—in doctor's hands—recommended to take plentiful rest, &c., &c.

The major suddenly brightened up.

"Oh—ah—invalided, are you, Mr. Tombs? Nothing serious, so that you can't go out—eh?"

"I am on the surgeon's list, sir," I said, endeavouring to look as poorly as I well could.

"Oh—ah—sorry for that—ahem! Very sorry!" said the major. And really he looked it.

Wonder upon wonders! Had his flinty heart softened? or had the crafty old fox some deep design for getting more work out of me, and was he merely beating about the bush, before he announced some further post of labour which I was destined to fill? I grew suspicious.

There was more silent hat-polishing for a minute or two, and then, looking up again, the major said suddenly—

"I am sorry you are poorly, for, do you know, I wanted you to take a walk with me."

Heaven and earth, and sea and land! Here was a proposal! Take a walk! In the name of fortune, what for, and where to? Who ever thought of taking a walk in, or around, Ballybrannigan? We had plenty of exercise in the barrack-parades and marchings-out, and there was absolutely no one to visit. I began to think that the whole morning's work was a strange dream, and gave myself a private pinch under the bed-clothes to make sure I was awake.

Horrible idea!—Had the major gone cracked all of a sudden?—Perhaps dignity and Ballybrannigan had turned his brain. Did he wish me to promenade the barracks in my night-dress? or would he propose next that we should throw ourselves out of the window? Well, thank goodness, my quarters were on the ground-floor, so no great harm could happen, if we did. And then,—now I came to

think of it,—he had actually been a quarter-of-an-hour in the room, and only come out with the mildest of all mild ejaculations! Oh, it was a clear case,—Major Beardwood had gone mad!

A sudden knock. Door thrown open. Enter Sprouts with, “Oh, I say, Tombs”—Sees the major, and stops transfixed.

“I was positively grateful to him, and called out, “What is it, Spr—Strong?”

The major is himself again. He looks thunder-clouds, and growls all sorts of anathemas under his breath,—I can see he does! Sprouts turns very red, and stammers out:—“Oh, I beg your pardon—I didn’t know—another time—I wanted—never mind—sorry I interrupted—” And so vanishes.

The major gave a sigh of relief.

“I tell you what, Tombs,” he began, in a friendly and confidential manner—“to make a long story short, I have got some ladies coming to Ballybrannigan—(here I pinched myself again, more severely than before)—and don’t quite know how to entertain them. You see, we old soldiers grow rusty at that sort of thing; and, as you are a regular lady’s man, I thought perhaps you would help me,—eh?”

“Certainly,” I managed to respond, wondering what this had to do with a walk through Ballybrannigan.

“But if you are on the sick list,” went on the major, “and unable to stir out,—why—aheh,—aha!—you see—eh?”

I did *not* see, and hinted as much. “Do your friends come to-day, Major Beardwood? for, if not—”

“Friends!—It’s my mother.”

“Oh, indeed!” said I.

“My mother, and the two daughters of my only brother. He is dead, poor fellow—yellow fever—eight or nine years ago. Wife dead, too; little thing—not fit for the service. I have always said no man should marry in the army under the rank of field-officer, and not then if he can help it. Bad work for wife, and worse for husband. These two girls were left as a legacy to my mother, the only legacy—aheh!—there was to leave. Nice little things—though I’ve not seen them for some years. Have you a mother living, Mr. Tombs?”

I told him I had.

“You are not ashamed of being fond of her—eh?”

I said, “Certainly not.”

“Ah, that’s right. I don’t think much of the man who is. No one like a mother,—no one like her in the world!—and I’m not ashamed of being fond of mine; no, in fact, proud of it, very proud of it, old as I am!—and, by George, I grow fonder of her every year, and less ashamed to own it!”

The major brought his hand down on the table as he spoke with quite a bang of emphasis. It was so honestly said that I grew excited too, and cried "Eccleat!"

"A soldier makes but a poor sort of son," continued the major. "Always knocking about. Two-thirds of his time abroad. Heaven knows I would have given the dear old lady a home, if she could have stood an army life; but it would never have done—never have done."

The major paused again, and seemed lost in reflection. I wondered would *he* ever have done.

"So she is coming to see you, sir," I remarked, at last.

"Ahem!—yes. And, do you know, Mr. Tombs, it will be the first visit I shall have had from her since I left home to join the 16 9th, as an ensign of sixteen. Of course I have been to see her, now and again, when I could; but she lives in a little out-of-the-way place down in Devonshire, where they make their wills if they have to go ten miles off, and I have never been able to move her until now."

"It is a long way for her to come. Have you never been quartered within easy distance of her home?"

"Oh! yes, yes. But then I used to run over and see her. And, on the whole, Mr. Tombs, I cannot regret that her visit should be paid now to Ballybrannigan, while I have the honour to be in command of Her Majesty's Forces—ahem!"

Bravo for the major! "Her Majesty's Forces" consisted of barely one hundred and sixty men of all ranks and sizes. But "the honour to be in command"—ah! that was it. The poor old lady was coming to witness her son's grandeur. I dare say she thought it a scandal on the nation that he had not been gazetted a field-marshal long before this; and now that he had the ghost of a dignity, the shadow of a command, she must needs share in the glory thereof. I felt an increasing interest in the pair, and in their little plan. Poor old major, and poor old mother! It was a hard case that the one should have trudged through the mud for so many years for a mere brevet-majority, sticking stationary in the army like a sort of perpetual curate; and no less hard on the other to have waited and hungered for her son's promotion, knowing, many a time, that a few bank-notes would do for him, in a moment, what all her tears and wishes were powerless to bring about. I felt as if the two were going to act a sort of play, wherein the major would strut about the stage, with a tinsel crown on his head, while his mother clapped her hands from the boxes; and in my own mind I determined to do my little best for the success of the piece. But all this time the major was speaking.

"Of course, my present position will enable me to offer the old lady all the advantages which the place affords. But, then," added

the major, reflectively, "what a place it is! No ladies, no society, no pretty country, no shops, not even a decent church."

"We will all do what we can to make Mrs. Beardwood's visit a pleasant one," I said, thinking whether it would be proper to vote her a member of the whist-club, and give her a supper.

"I dare say my mother will manage well enough," responded the major. "She is too old to care for racketing about; knits away in the chimney-corner, and that sort of thing. But, then, you see, there are my nieces—eh?"

"Send to Dublin for a piano," I suggested.

"Ahem!—aha!—expensive work—always the case where there are women. They are extravagant luxuries, the whole lot of them, except when it happens to be your mother—God bless her!" said the major, his face clearing up as he finished.

"And a whole cargo of novels," I again suggested.

"Ah! yes, yes—that is not a bad idea; and, perhaps, some work—some stitching, or wool-work, or something, you know, in the millinery line—needles and knitting-pins, and that sort of thing—eh, Mr. Tombs?"

I was doubtful.

"Out of your line, I am afraid, major. Leave it to the ladies themselves. We shall expect slippers all round, if you provide materials in this way."

"Well, well, well," said the major; "but, apart from piano, and books, and stitching, they'll want a lady or two to chat with; and we haven't got any—ahem! aha!—that is just the confounded difficulty."

True enough, and I did not see any way out of it. The wife of the colour-sergeant of my company was the nearest approach to a lady in barracks; while outside—oh! by the way, this reminded me—the major had proposed a walk. Was it a lady hunt—an exploring expedition after female companions for his guests?

"There are no ladies anywhere about Ballybrannigan," I remarked.

"Why, yes and no, Mr. Tombs. There have been none near the barracks since we came, but there are a few in the town, you know."

"We shall have hard work to find them," I said, laughing. "You will have to manufacture one or two, or offer a good big reward for their discovery."

"I know a house where there are a round dozen, ready-made and discovered," said the major; "and if you hadn't been laid up, I was going—ahem!—to have asked you to call there with me this very morning."

"If it is to see a dozen ladies," I said, incredulously, "I'll bid

defiance to the doctor, and accompany you with all the pleasure in life. Why, major, you must believe in me!"

"You have been in Ballybrannigan church pretty often, I think, Mr. Tombs. It doesn't need any magic to discover a pew-full of the necessary article."

"You don't mean the rector's family?"

"I do—ahem! Why not—eh?"

Those slatternly girls who look as though they only dressed themselves once a month, and never heard of such things as hair-brushes—

Untidy heads are better than none at all, so long as they're female ones.

Who live in that old, tumble-down house, as untidy as themselves—

Any port in a storm—

And whose father, they say, hates a red-coat as he does the—a papist? You are a bold man, Major Beardwood!

Don't you be a coward, then, Mr. Tombs! Small blame to the poor things for being slatterns; they have no one to dress for. As to the house, it is only like every other in the town. And if their father dislikes soldiers, that is no reason why he should dislike my mother, God bless her!

"Amen!" said I. "Well, major, I'll go with you. It will be a great lark, in any case; that it is to say (seeing him look a little doubtful), it will be something fresh. And they can't eat us, can they?"

"Ahem! aha!" growled the major, drawing himself up, and letting me know by that gesture that the Rector of Ballybrannigan might conceive himself greatly honoured in receiving a visit from the Commander-in-Chief of all the Forces. "Then I'll leave you to dress; and—oh! ah! yes!—you'll want some breakfast, won't you? Well, be as quick as you can. I suppose there is no fashionable visiting hour in Ballybrannigan, and we shall be sure to catch them all at home if we go early. Here he walked to the door, then stopped. "I can trust to your discretion, Mr. Tombs. I am sure, not to speak about this to any of the mess. They will see my guests soon enough; but, meanwhile, I don't want my mother's visit, or any of my plans for her comfort, to be known,—say, for instance, to that chattering young blockhead who was in your room just now."

I bowed, and the major vanished.

CHAPTER VII

A CLOSE INSPECTION OF SAID BONNETS.

It was 9.30 A.M. when the major finished his say, and left me to dress. At 10.30 we started, like two new editions of "Coles in Search of"—well, not exactly "a wife," but "a woman." It was astonishing how the major's manner had altered. He was polite, and even deferential; quite a courtly contrast to his usual self. And then he was got up elaborately, even to lavenders and patent leather boots. I confessed to a strange sensation at being rigged out for a visit at that hour of the morning—indeed, I may say, at being in plain clothes at all: for at Ballybrannigan I was seldom or never out of uniform all day. There was no temptation to wander beyond the barrack-gate; and whereas at other places you never donned scarlet when you could help it, here it was too great a bore, and a positive waste of clothes, to make any change, unless, it might be, to a loose shooting-jacket, as most comfortable to lounge about and smoke in.

I wonder what Bullen and Perry think we are after," I said, as I saw them gazing after us in great astonishment. "It will be quite a delightful mystery in the barracks."

"Ahem! No need for them to think at all," said the major, dryly.—N.B. There are a good many members of every mess who seldom do.

Ballybrannigan was about the most dismal, ill built, and badly kept town it is possible to conceive. The one street which, by any courtesy, could be called a paved one, had no proper footpath, and was worn into holes, which, being generally full of water, formed impromptu baths for the children and pigs, of both of which there was any quantity, so indiscriminately mixed up and dirty, that it was occasionally difficult to distinguish children from pigs, and pigs from children. Fowls, also, and geese, were plentiful, giving to the place a farm-yard appearance, further carried out by the heaps of offensive abominations, not to say manure, which were thickly strewn about the road, often just in front of the house-doors. There were no railings, no little garden-plots, no clean white steps, such as you see in England. The houses were strangers to paint or whitewash. The windows were mostly rags or paper, seldom glass. The doors stood invitingly open, and let out odours indescribable. The male population smoked and basked in the sun, with a philosophical indifference for themselves and everything else. The females, in their (apparently) *one* petticoat and bare legs, gossiped, quarrelled, thumped their children, and made hard work of doing nothing. Cleanliness and comfort there seemed

to be none; and yet I am bound to confess there were many cheerful faces and pleasant smiles—nay, more, a ready politeness and wish to oblige, when you spoke to these poor Ballybrannigan peasants, which contrasted curiously with the scowling glances and sullen incivility which a stranger meets with in many of the English villages and country towns. I speak from experience. There is not a more polite or a kinder-hearted nation on the face of the earth than the Irish. Easily led to believe themselves wronged, explosive as nitro-glycerine on the subject of their country and their religion, sticking at nothing to gratify their revenge, they, nevertheless, will share their last penny or potato with a friend, and give their very life for one they love. A nation of contradictions, until you recognise and make allowance for the difference between Celt and Saxon, and judge them by no English standard or rule whatsoever. The man who lounges about in a daily state of whiskey, tobacco, rage, and idleness,—who lies behind a hedge with the deliberate purpose of sending a brace of slugs through his landlord's skull,—who is the willing and fanatic tool of any secret society which professes to relieve his country and exalt his faith,—who, in short, is a puzzle and a nuisance to every English statesman, as he has always been, from Cromwell, who tried to improve by killing, down to such clever hands at blarney and conciliation as Sir Robert Peel,—this same man has pluck, energy, wit, and warmth of affection, more than enough for a good soldier, citizen, Christian, and man. At present the most peculiar thing about him is, that he can and does use all these good qualities for others, but never for himself, and in every other country but his own;—a sort of plant which blooms in every foreign hedgerow, but sickens, a useless weed, on native soil; in fact, a plant requiring a great deal more skill, and Heaven only knows how much more loving care, than any political gardener had yet bestowed upon it.

I do not mean to say that these were exactly the thoughts I had while walking through Ballybrannigan with Major Beardwood. It was dangerous work philosophising—especially for the major's patent leathers—amongst pigs, children, and other miscellaneous cattle, not to speak of a road which was three parts mud and the rest water. The Reverend Michael's house was quite at the other side of the town, and stood in a waste howling wilderness of a garden, remarkably fertile in weeds, but otherwise a failure. The garden-gate was half off its hinges, and more than half rotten and maimed, from want of paint and anything but want of rough usage. Very possibly it had served as a swing for the juvenile O'Connor. There was a strip of tangled shrubbery round the garden, and then a lawn, which evidently answered more purposes than that of mere ornament, being worn threadbare—or rather grass-bare—as a cricket

ground, while, at the moment we entered, it was like a dozen ships in full sail, from the quantity of garments, chiefly of the female order, which were fluttering in the wind to dry. The gravel path—that is to say, what ought to have been a path, for it was difficult to make out which was gravel and which grass—led right through this grove of wet linen, so that, what with bobbing, and ducking, and dodging through rows of articles not to be mentioned or thought of, it was quite a gymnastic feat to reach the front door, besides giving us both a mildewy feeling of general dampness.

The door, like the gate, cried out for paint, and was free from bell-handle or knocker. There was little fear of injuring the panels, so the major tried his stick upon them. After the first attempt, there was a very audible scuffle inside, followed by a hurried trampling of feet, and then silence. We waited for a minute or two, conscious that several little heads were peeping at us from round the corner, while, if I mistake not, another and larger head, in a perfect halo of curl papers, was flattened against the remotest corner of the neighbouring window, trying to catch a glimpse of our persons. The major grew impatient, and rapped again. There was another pause, and then a great pulling back of bolts, and creaking of a rusty lock, suggesting that the front door was somewhat of a superfluity, then with a sharp jerk it flew open, and we were confronted by a red-faced damsel, “all hair and eyes,” as the major very truly described her afterwards. From the damp shiver which seized us both, and the warm steam which came up from her garments, I guessed that she had just come from the wash-tub. She breathed very hard and stared, while the major inquired if the Reverend or Mrs. Michael O'Connor was at home, and we both offered our cards. These latter she took with great circumspection, meanwhile keeping the door only half open; and having received them in a moist hand, and with a grasp which promised ill for their preservation, coolly shut the door in our faces, and left us to our meditations. The major grew alarmingly red and explosive about the face, and would, I believe, have made off, if I had not suggested that we might expect the damsel again; and sure enough, after a minute or so, the door opened for the second time, and we were invited to enter.

It was a good-sized hall, but wofully knocked about and dirty. Caps, bonnets, shawls, and coats without number, hung on pegs all round the walls. Hoops, dirty boots, an old doll, and a broken rocking-horse, made navigation difficult, especially as there was only darkness visible when the front door was closed. Following our guide we were ushered into what, I suppose, was the drawing-room, and there, without exaggeration, we sat for twenty minutes, *tête-à-tête* and expectant.

For if there is one thing I hate more than another it is a world of
 antinecessaries. I do not hate from that wish in Ballybrannigan
 There was no perfect set of them in that drawing room. They
 covered the sofa, the chair, the books on the table, the glass had
 on the chimney piece, everything, which by any possibility could
 hold them. In their tone they were covered with dust and indeed the
 whole room looked as if it was closed all the year round. The dust and
 antinecessaries composed its principal furniture. The chairs were
 rickety; the sofa had its springs broken and rattled when sat upon
 like an old piano; the curtains, once white but now yellow, were
 full of holes; while the windows were so dirty that they might have
 been frosted (I should rather say black-leaded) for all the seeing
 there was through them. I suppose to have a most too bad
 of. We had plenty of time to notice all this and comment there-
 upon. And to read, if we had felt so disposed, the volume of ser-
 mons and report of some Irish anti-popery society, which composed
 the literature of the apartment. At last, when the major had lashed
 himself up into an ungovernable fit of the fidgets, and your humble
 servant was nearly asleep, the door opened, and in walked the
 Reverend Michael O'Connor, somewhat like a clothed prop in a suit of
 black, and with about as much expression in his face as his wife's
 delicate, unwholesome-looking woman, given to freckles and red
 eyes; and a young lady, the eldest daughter, I presume, nearly as
 tall as her father, and almost as spare, in a dress which hung about
 her like a sack. A mingled odour of kitchen soap and bergamot
 entered with them. There was a stiff series of bows on both sides,
 and then we all five sat down and commenced business.

It was a lively conversation—very. Our hosts and hostesses
 sat stolidly and solemnly silent, except when constrained to answer
 "Yes," or "No." The major "hem!"'ed and "ha!"'ed, and
 made desperate but abortive efforts to come to the point; while as
 for me, the few remarks I hazarded were received with so little
 attention, that I remained silent, and left the major to his fate.
 Indeed, I was extinguished at an early period, the Reverend
 Michael coolly asking the major, over my head, whether his "young
 friend" had "just entered the army," adding, with a sepulchral
 groan, that it (the army) was "a school of temptation for the
 young." After this I thought I might as well be quiet.

Whatever could the major expect from such a family? and why
 not say what he came for, and have done with it? He did get as
 far as "We never see you in barracks, Mr. O'Connor," and was met
 with "My duty lies in a very different sphere. I always attend
 your hospital, when desired, specially to do so. Otherwise I con-
 sider my time can be more profitably employed." And goodness,
 what a brogue the man spoke with!

To downward the descent the affair had proved an unlighted
 breeze, when, just as I was about in desperation to take the initiative,
 and rise in such a pointed manner that the major could not but
 have followed suit (finely his feelings of *Irish*), there was a quiet
 step across the hall, the door was flung open, and there rushed a
 beauteous-skipped (any word you like) excepted—into the
 room a really handsome girl of eighteen or so—another member of
 the Reverend Michael's family, but such a pleasant contrast to her
 parents, and distinct that the major's face (and I suppose mine) was
 lighted up by the instant. She had just come from my walk, and
 her face was ruddy with sun and wind, which (last had) her
 curls about (under) her straw hat, so that her sharp black eyes
 looked out from a forest of equally black hair, untidy but bewitching,
 indeed, to be candid, she was untidy all over. She
 wore the national Irish costume—a green or scarlet cloak—but her
 cloak, like her old uniform coat, was stained and purple. Her
 brown dress was looped up so as to show a net over a clean white
 petticoat, and the gimples obtained, new and again of a pair of
 good-sized boots gave sufficient warrant for a summons to the shoe-
 maker. It was Irish beauty unadorned. A merrier, and at the
 same time more wicked-looking gipsy, I have never set eyes upon. I
 Regent-street would have shuddered. Belgravia stood aghast at
 dirty hands, uncombed hair, untidy clothes, dilapidated boots, and
 hat; but here, on her native heath—I mean bogs—she was perfectly
 delicious—yes, verily delicious, piquante, charming, bewitching,
 only waiting to be turned into marble or transferred to canvas, to
 set all the Regent-street loungers and Belgravia dames raving about
 “exquisite figure!”—“such *noir*!”—“so original!”—“so de-
 lightfully Irish!”—“now, isn't it lovely?”—“are there really
 such lovely creatures in Ireland?”—And to think of this beautiful
 wild flower blooming on such a sorry soil, amidst such ungainly
 common-places as the three who had received us!—The girl had
 skipped into the middle of the room before any of
 the three could stop her. Then they gave tongue together:—
 “Kathleen, whatever in the name—” “Kathleen, how dare you—”
 “Kathleen, I am astonished—”

A sort of chorus, wherein the Reverend Michael came in last as
 bass, and of which the fair subject took not the slightest heed,
 beyond saying:—
 “Oh, sure, papa, they told me you were here; and the post is
 come in, and by the same token brought Peggy a letter. Here it
 is—and cook wants mamma—and Bobby's been and fired a cracker
 in the pigstye—and so—and so I thought I'd come and tell you,”
 ended the young lady, bursting into a laugh. Bursting in the

just, the proper word. Everything she said or did was at a burst.

"Your mamma and I are engaged with these gentlemen," said her father; "and——"

"Oh, yes, and they're officers from the barracks; though they're not dressed up in scarlet either."

The major had risen; so had I. He bowed. I waxed bolder, and said,

"I must ask to be introduced, Mr. O'Connor."

"Oh, faith, I'll introduce myself," broke in the young lady. "I'm Kathleen, and you sit in the corner of the big pew on Sunday, and go to sleep while papa is preaching."

"Papa, do stop her——"

"Leave the room, Kathleen."

Chorus again.

"Now, papa dear, it is true all the same. He don't mind me. Sure, everybody knows Kathleen. And this other gentleman (nodding towards the major) is the one who says the amens so loud. Oh, I know them all. I'm sure I ought to do, for there's no one else much to look at. And now I'll sit down and be good."

And down she sat, accordingly.

The major and I both laughed, loud and long, Kathleen joining in, until the room rang again. The look on the faces of the other three was a caution.

"I really do not know how to apologise, Major Beardwood," began the Reverend Michael, evidently much disturbed.

The major was going to stop him, but Miss Kathleen was off again.

"What's the matter, papa, dear? Sure, no one is ever angry with me—now are they? And oh, I do so like soldiers! Now, Peggy, you needn't look so cross. You like them, too,—you know you do—for I've heard you say so."

"Mamma, this is unbearable."

"Hold your tongue, Kathleen."

"Kathleen, for shame of yourself."

I never saw three solemn people so put out and discomfited. As for myself, I could do nothing but laugh. And the major—it was such a grateful relief that he threw dignity to the winds, and cried out,

"Bravo! Well done, Miss Kathleen! That's just what I wanted! You must come to see us."

"So I would, if papa would let me," responded the young lady at once. "I should dearly love to go inside the barracks, and see the drilling and firing, and band and marching, and—oh, it must be so jolly!"

"Pray, Major Beardwood, don't humour the silly girl to folly," said her papa in great anger.

The major blandly waved his hand.

"I assure you, Mr. O'Connor, your daughter interests me greatly. An old soldier is always happy to find the service appreciated. (Well done, major.) May I venture to hope that her feelings are shared by the rest of your amiable family?" (Go it again, major! Better and better!)

These interjections, the reader may understand, came *sotto voce* from myself.

The incorrigible Kathleen struck in once more.

"Oh, papa and mamma don't like soldiers at all. But I do—and I do so wish I might come and see you. But papa won't take me, so it is no good."

I do believe I should have outraged decorum and said, "Come without him;" but the major had his wits about him, and turned, with all the grace in the world to Mrs. O'Connor—

"My dear madam, your daughter has brought me to the very point I was wishful to arrive at. I have some ladies coming to the barracks—in fact, my mother and my two nieces. May I beg, as a great favour, that you will do them and myself the honour of a visit to my—ahem!—my humble quarters; and—ahem—aha! (the major was getting foggy)—do us the honour to—in fact—ahem—to see us." (Ignominious ending.)

"Oh, mamma, won't it be splendid?" exclaimed Kathleen, clapping her hands. "Of course I shall go, too. And, maybe, the major will give us a bit of a dance! And, oh! you must go mamma, now, won't you?"

I was playing only second fiddle all this time.

"If I may venture to add my entreaties to those of Major Beardwood," I said, "I beg most heartily to second his request. We are very badly off for ladies' society in the barracks."

Miss O'Connor, *alias* Peggy, looked petrified with horror. Mrs. O'Connor turned meaningly towards her husband. The reverend gentleman thereupon arose, and placing his hand, with a solemn gesture inside his waistcoat, was beginning, when Kathleen broke out again.

"Now, papa, you're going to say 'No;' and if you do, I'll plague you out of your life, that I will! It's a shame, so it is. And we with no one decent to speak to, from one year's end to the other. And I'm sure the major means what he says. And, oh, I should so like to go—that I should!—I never wanted anything half so much. And, oh dear me, it is too bad!" and the young lady pouted, and seemed more than half inclined to cry.

The Reverend Michael closed his eyes, as if to shut out all appeal, and essayed to begin again. A perfect torrent broke forth this time—

stay! Oh! I have wanted it so long, and didn't know how. And, sure, it's no hardship. They're all gentlemen, and there's no better. And there's lots of nobility, and Lord Ryd-robyn and here's the major come to ask us, and—and, here there was something very like a fact, still I'll never forgive you, if you don't say "Yes" me never!"

Did I hear aright? Did the young lady mention Lord Ryd-robyn? Why, what in the name of everything curious did she know about Sprouts's titled relative? I stared at her in astonishment. But the rector had got his innings at last, and was making the most of them.

"Major Beardwood and you, sir," turning to me, "you have paid me a visit, and I am willing to believe, mean kindly by so doing. But I have already said that I never enter your walls, except when compelled by actual duty, nor can I permit any of my family, especially the female portion of it, to place themselves deliberately in the way of temptation. Such scenes are not for those who strive to keep from the world and all its vanities. Our lives in this house are shaped after another fashion. Indeed, bringing his hand down as if upon the pulpit-cushion, "the very presence of a soldier in this unhappy, papistical country, is a cause for sorrow of heart, reminding us of the evils which a false idolatrous worship and lack of true Protestant principles have brought about—grumbling and discontent, rebellion and tumults, which necessitate the presence of an arm of flesh. It is not enough," raising his voice as he warmed to his work—"it is not enough to be scourged with poverty and want—it is not enough—"

"Oh! yes it is, and more than enough," forgetful of good manners, and rising from his seat in all the majesty of commander-in-chief. "More than enough, I assure you. We did not come to hear a sermon, but to invite you to the barracks. I see our visit is fruitless, so, good morning, sir!—good morning, madam!—good morning, Miss O'Connor!" And, with three dignified bows, the major stalked into the hall, leaving the Reverend Michael transfixed and motionless, with one hand extended still, and his mouth open. I imitated my superior, and in another second we were both at the front-door.

"Hullo!" exclaimed the major, suddenly, "we have not said 'Good-bye!' to Miss Kathleen—eh?"

But Kathleen had vanished, and there was no returning into the drawing-room to leave a message.

When we got outside, I am sorry to say, that the major's language was anything but parliamentary. He had nearly been choked with suppressed emotion, and now it all came out with a will, and to such an extent that he did not let off all the steam

until we had skinned through the clothes, and reached the gate on the other side. For my own part, I was thinking of Kathleen and Lord Hyarobyn. How on earth did she get know anything about him? She spoke as if she had seen him, and the name came out so pat that it was evidently not the first time she had talked about him.

My hand was on the gate, when the major stopped his maledictions, and cried out

Upon my life, there's Miss Kathleen, after all!

And, sure enough, there she was, threading her way through the little shrubbery to our left, panting and out of breath, as though she had been running. Alas for the brown dress! It had come to extensive grief. The shrubbery had torn it until considerably more of the white petticoat was visible than is usually allowed in society. She had lost her hat, too, and her hair was in worse disorder than ever.

"Oh, dear!" she said, as soon as she reached us, "I thought I should be too late. I've run all round, through the trees, lest they should see me. I knew how it would be—cross old things! Speaking to them is no good—not a bit. I hope you gave it them well, that I do!"

"My dear young lady," said the major, taking her hand with much gallantry, "for your sake, I am very sorry we have been unsuccessful."

"Oh! it's enough to provoke a saint!" And you don't know you don't know," she repeated, laying a strange emphasis on the words, "how much I have longed and hoped to pay a visit to the barracks. And now, I suppose, a half-sob, and a pitiful look at the major, I suppose it's no use."

"My dear young lady," again said the major, quite embarrassed.

"Oh! I know—you needn't trouble to tell me. I can't go without someone with me."

"But I wish to goodness you could!" said I.

"But when these ladies come down, you spoke of, couldn't I then?" went on Kathleen.

"Couldn't you what, my dear?" asked the major.

"Couldn't I go with them, or call, if I had a servant with me, or meet them—or something?" Oh, dear! surely it might be managed somehow!" said the poor girl, and she began fairly to cry.

It was very absurd, but then I think I have said somewhere before, that I never can stand a woman's tears. Not seeing any way out of it, I relieved my mind by untheatrising Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor. The major was dreadfully embarrassed. It was evident he

could have nothing more to do with the rest of the family, and his notions of propriety did not permit him to encourage any clandestine work. The Commander of the Forces must be careful—of course

“If your papa and mamma will allow you to come, my dear, I am sure my mother will be most happy to see you,” he said, at length, after a pause, during which poor Kathleen sobbed into a very soiled pocket-handkerchief, and made her face damp and streaky. She shook her head.

“Faith! they’ll consent when this gate grows apples, but not before—not they,” she said, bitterly. “We might as well be in a desert, as in this—this wretched hole”—looking round contemptuously through her tears. “Oh, you don’t know what an awful place it is to live in! I wish I was dead—I do indeed!”

And she fell to work again, and sobbed as though her heart would break.

“Well, well, well! Hush, now—hush!” said the major, as though he were soothing a child; “wait till my mother comes, and then we’ll see what we can do. Yes—that is the best way. I daresay something can be managed. Yes, yes; don’t cry so! There, that’s it; we’ll see—we’ll see. And now, Mr. Tombs, we really must be going.”

“Ah, but wait a minute,” said Kathleen; “you must not go yet. I’ve something else to say, only this first thing put it out of my head.”

The major gave a “ahem” of impatience, and glanced in a nervous manner towards the house. The fluttering garments on the clothes-lines were the only obstacles to a view from the windows, and what if the Reverend Michael, or Mrs. O’Connor, took it into their heads to join the party? Kathleen gave another smudge to her face, and put the handkerchief, rolled up like a cricket-ball—to which, in colour, it bore no small resemblance—into her pocket. Then she looked up, and smiled on the major, who was getting into the fidgets.

“I won’t cry any more,” she said. “Sure, I know it does no good, and”—shaking her hair from off her face—“it doesn’t make one look any prettier. And now I’ll tell you what I want. There’s a soldier in your barracks, who comes courting one of our servants—Mary—a very nice girl, and very good to me—faith! I can be thankful even for a servant’s kindness!—and he’s not a bad sort of a fellow either, and very fond of her, and they have been keeping company ever since you came to Ballybrannigan; and now she has heard this morning that he is in no end of a row for getting drunk last night, or something; and, poor thing, she’s crying her eyes out ever since.”

“My dear young lady——”

"Ah, don't be 'dear young lady'-ing me, major, till you hear all. Mary was with him last night, until she had to come in for bed; and faith! mamma thought it was in bed she was all the evening with a tooth-ache. But she was out with him, and treated him to a glass of whiskey—and she shouldn't; but she did. And then he promised he'd go straight home. But he didn't. And then he must have got into a fight, for when she asked at the barrack-door this morning, the men told her he was shut up and going to be punished. And so"—continued Kathleen—"directly I heard you were here, I determined I'd ask you to let the poor fellow off; for, you know, he meant no harm—and then—she loves him." And really the young lady looked at the major as if this last was quite a good and sufficient reason.

"Ah—ah—ahem—aha!" went the major, rather gruffly.

A thought struck me.

"Is the man's name M'Quin, Miss Kathleen?"

"Sure it is."

"It's Singleton's servant, sir," I said to the major; "I heard he had got into the guard-room for some scrape or other."

"Well, you won't punish him, will you?" she pleaded again.

"My dear Miss Kathleen," said the major, his patience quite exhausted, "I have but limited power in the matter. There are certain rules and regulations in the service which must be upheld. If a man wilfully breaks any of these, he can blame no one but himself for the consequences. But, come, come—cheer up"—relaxing his orderly-room countenance, as he saw Kathleen's look of dismay—"I will—ahem—I will make all inquiries, and—ahem—there—good-bye, dear—good-bye!"

The major tore himself loose, and was off. I followed him as in duty bound, but not without a warm good-bye to poor Kathleen, who stood gazing disconsolately after us, with a face which foreboded another shower of tears so soon as we should have disappeared.

How came the girl to know anything about Lord Rydrobyn? This was the question I kept asking myself all the rest of the day, having altogether forgotten to ask it of Kathleen herself at the gate. Oh, by the way, servants will gossip. Very possibly M'Quin had caught up the name in the officers' quarters and carried it to his sweetheart, and she again to her young mistress. Yes, that must be the way of it; and having, as I thought, satisfactorily solved the problem, I dismissed it from my thoughts altogether.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. BEARDWOOD.

DEAR good old lady, I shall never forget her! There is "no one like a mother," as Major Beardwood truly said,—at least, when the mother is anything like the specimen he showed us at Ballybrannigan. Considerably over sixty years of age, but hale and hearty as if she meant to rival old Parr—able and willing to trot about as briskly and as much as son and grand-daughters would permit—all eyes and ears for everything that was going on, and with a kind, motherly smile for every living being about the barracks, even down to Nipper, Grip and Co., who wagged their tails, and swore fealty as soon as they saw her,—never was such an old lady! We sang her praises at mess, and in the bosom of the whist-club, from the moment her good old face looked round the barrack-yard, with wonder and delight, as the major escorted her on her first tour of inspection; and long before we had called and sat delighted in her company, forgetful of the length of our visit. A proud man was the major, and his pride was so manly and honest, so frank and sincere, so—everything that a good son should feel, that there was not a man in the regiment but respected him for it. Sprouts, indeed, did attempt a sickly joke at "old Beardy's going into pinafores again," but was shut up at once, and as fiercely, by a unanimous growl, that he never attempted the like again. The fact is, men are not sentimental—and, if they were, the service would soon lick all that out of them—but, whether soldiers or civilians, they instinctively recognise and reverence true genuine feeling, possibly because they see so little of it; and, upon my honour, as I look back through the recollections of a tolerably eventful life, I do not know that I have ever witnessed a more interesting, & more touching sight than the respectful loving attention which the rough, worldly, soured and seared veteran paid to his old mother, in full sight of officers and men. "A touch of nature makes the whole world world kin." Major Beardwood with his mother, made us all children again. I am not going to write sentimentally, like a three-volume novel, but I am much mistaken if I did not see more than one gruff and grim old soldier, who for years had never had any other models, of female-kind to associate with than such as are to be found in the back-stairs of our garrison-towns, draw his hand across his eyes, and look womanish, as he watched the gentle old lady leaning on the arm of her son,—both mother and son so radiantly happy and proud of one another.

For myself, I know her coming did me all the good in the world. Most youngsters, when they have been kicked out of the

parent nest for a few years, are apt first to assume, and then really to feel, a worldliness and contempt for all that is *feminine*, and therefore tender and good. ~~They assume~~ These feelings first, I say, and then they get them. Old teaching, habits, and impressions, are buried beneath a crust of cynicism, the result—to instance the army—of merciless ridicule and unbounded craft. At mess, daily contact with men who have gone through the hardening process themselves, and contact, I am sorry to say, also, with women who may be divided into two classes—first, "garrison hacks," the race of fast, horsey, dressy, flirty, experienced damsels, with designing mammas, who form the staple commodity in all garrison towns, and angle desperately at balls and picnics for any red-coated fish who is worth the hooking—yes, and don't give up in a hurry, either!—and secondly, the "*Anonyms*" (thanks to our age of gilt and varnish, I can thus name a class unnameable), of whom I shall say nothing, except that in fashionable immorality the Army is not one whit behind the Universities, the Bar, the Civil Service, or any profession in which men are thrown together, some ready to buy experience, others having already bought it, and by no means unwilling to see others follow their example.

At Ballybrannigan, however, we suffered from want of all female society whatsoever; and this again, I suppose, goes pretty far towards roughening the softer part of a young "sub,"—goodness knows, some of them are soft parts altogether! At any rate, Mrs. Beardwood's coming did me more good than I was at all aware of at the time. She brought an atmosphere of home with her,—Clitkenborough breezes seemed to blow across the barracks, and old scenes and faces came back so vividly that I turned into quite a good correspondent, and wrote to my mother and sisters so often, at such length and so affectionately, that they were all bewildered, and wrote back to know whether I had fallen in love again, and who I was "spooney upon" this time.

Capital thing for the major, his mother's visit! Old grudges were forgotten. His roughness and gruffness, his interminable parades and everlasting marches, his snubbing, and hectoring, and bullying—all the wrongs inflicted on officers and men during the last few months, during which he had sat upon the throne and been a nuisance,—all were forgiven and forgotten for the sake of his mother, and his good son-ship towards her. Remember, Ballybrannigan barracks were like a village, where everybody knows what everybody else has for dinner, and we had nothing else to do but watch the major and his guests. In any other case, and in any other place, the conduct of mother and son might have passed without much notice.

And yet, so far as discipline went, the major was not one whit

altered. He was just as stern and unbending as before ; drilled us, if anything, a little more, marched us out as regularly as ever, punished offenders with the old, familiar air of liking it, and made the orderly-room as hot as ever for the poor adjutant or acting ditto. Curious ! Not at all. Had not Mrs. Beardwood come to see the king upon his throne, crown on head, sceptre in hand, subjects bowing down and doing obeisance ? What is the good of being a king if you don't act accordingly ? It was the turning-point of the whole play that the major should act Commander-in-Chief with as much dignity and earnestness as he could, while, as I said before, his mother looked on and applauded.

And she *did* applaud. I do not suppose she had ever seen a soldier before in her life, except, of course, her son, and such few specimens as chanced to stray into the little town where she had vegetated through more than threescore years. Certainly she had never been in barracks before, and all that appertains to a soldier's life was an " Arabian Night's Entertainment " to her. She used to sit at the open window during parade, in a black silk dress, white cap, gold spectacles and chain, with her two nieces on each side of her chair, like a couple of aide-de-camps, smiling and nodding in the seventh heaven of delight, while the major shouted his orders, and we, poor beggars ! marched and counter-marched, wheeled and turned, up and down, backwards and forwards, wishing our commander at every place suitable for bores, and yet retracting that wish, so soon as it was conceived, for the sake of the pleasure his orders and our obedience were giving to the innocent, simple-minded old lady up aloft at the window. We scarcely numbered more than one hundred and sixty men of all ranks in the barracks, allowing for servants, cooks, orderlies, and men on guard or in hospital. It was a good muster when we turned out one hundred and thirty men on parade, and amusing it must have been to any outsider to see this baby of a battalion, this little more than full-sized company, put through an elaborate drill,—the old lady firmly believing all the while that she was witnessing such a spectacle as neither the Phoenix nor Hyde-park could possibly produce.

But the great scene of all was, when the major took up his stand beneath her window, and the grand army marched passed in slow time, officers saluting, and everything done correct and proper, as if her son had been the " Great Duke " himself. There is only the difference of a letter between bathos and pathos—the ridiculous changes into the sublime, oftentimes, by a very easy transition—and I do believe there was not a man in that little dépôt (I know I can vouch for myself) who did not march past the major) and that window over his head, as if under the immediate command of Lord Seaton,* and in the presence of Royalty itself.

* Then commanding the forces in Ireland.

Dreadfully afraid was the major, at first, of any slight being shown towards his mother, and any ridicule at his own attentions to her. Through all his pomposity, underneath all his dignity, it was easy to discover a sensitive fear of any conduct on the part of officers or men which should damage his position in the eyes of one to whom he wished to appear as a mandarin of the first button. He might have spared himself all alarm. It was marvelous with what instinctive delicacy the whole *depôt* recognised the true state of things, and shaped its behaviour accordingly. Scrupulous attention and respect did the major receive, both on and off duty, from every one in the barracks, for the sake of our lady visitor. I say "our" visitor, for she had not been with us two days before it was unanimously decided that she belonged to the Slashers, and was one of us, to all intents and purposes. Indeed, whether for the sake of her son, or merely from natural kindness of heart, I do not pretend to decide, but she took a lively interest in every one of us. She was always trotting about, with a kind word here and a smile there, stopping and chatting with every soldier she met, patting the children on the head, and giving them oranges and sweets from a huge bag she carried about with her; visiting the kitchens and bestowing sage recipes on the cooks; popping her head into the guard-room and begging the men to be careful they wrapped up well and did not take cold; penetrating into every nook and corner of the married men's quarters, and winning the hearts of the women by sitting down with them, and going, with the interest only a woman (and such a woman) can express and feel, into all their little sorrows and joys, nursing their babies, and leaving behind her substantial proofs of her goodwill, such as, I am afraid, she could ill afford. Such was Mrs. Beardwood's daily custom at Ballybrannigan. The men all saluted her as if she had been the colonel himself; the women curtsied as she passed; the children ran after her, in such numbers as there were to run, for we had not many married men in the *depôt*, and clung to her gown until she could hardly move; the dogs, as I have said, knew and welcomed her after their own fashion. Even Rattler, who so rarely took to any but red-coated males, seemed to have made up his mind that she was some eccentric officer who preferred a different style of dress. He attended her up and down the barracks, wagging his tail when she looked at him, sitting down when she stopped, staying outside when she went into any of the passages, and finally seeing her back to the major's quarters, under the impression, I fancy, the whole time, that she was the orderly officer. of the day, and had been on a tour of duty.

One day she penetrated into the hospital, made friends with the surgeon, with the hospital-sergeant, with the orderlies, with the pa-

tients, and, from that time forth, constituted herself a daily visitor. It was only when in the routine of duty it fell to my lot to go round the wards, as some one officer has to do every day, that I discovered her new haunt. I stepped carelessly into a ward with the usual question, "All right, I suppose, sergeant?" when suddenly I saw the old lady sitting composedly by one of the beds, with her bag as usual upon her lap, and reading out of the Bible in a soft, low, sweet tone, for all the world like the purr of a cat—it is a queer comparison, but I can find no other—a sort of voice which constrained you to do what I did, viz., sit down reverently and wait till she had finished; while the poor fellow lay and listened, though, I dare say, if the truth were known, he was thinking more of the reader than the words she read, or, possibly, of a mother of his own, and the time when she sat beside him, as Mrs. Beardwood was doing then.

I say this with some foundation, for he happened to come of better stock than the generality of our men, being a farmer's son from Lancashire, who had been picked up for us by a recruiting sergeant some five years previously. He had risen to the rank of sergeant, and was a quiet, well-behaved fellow, who knew his duty and did it. Unfortunately, he had a naturally delicate constitution. A succession of colds had ended in inflammation of the lungs, and that again in a rapid decline, which set all doctors' skill at defiance. Poor Bennett, he had taken off his uniform for the last time. Too weak to be invalided and sent home, he lay quietly waiting for marching orders from his great Captain above, and if any one human being more than another could have helped him to wait, and encouraged him to wait hopefully, it was good old Mrs. Beardwood. She tended and nursed him, so far as she was permitted, as if he had been her own son. At all times and seasons she was to be seen trotting across to the hospital, with her bag—which, by the way, held everything and anything, from a handkerchief to a four-pound loaf—full of oranges, or grapes, or appetite-provoking cakes, not forgetting always her Bible and Prayer-book, while behind her was certain to follow a servant carrying a jelly, or basin of beef-tea, or some other delicacy, which she had either cooked herself, or seen concocted with her own eyes; for she reigned as supreme in the mess kitchen as elsewhere, and utterly despised the efforts of our cooks, who could do little more than to

(There is nothing like the touch of a woman's finger about a sick bed—let all bear witness who have been ill!) I never shall forget the look of satisfaction with which Sergeant Bennett would watch her entrance into his ward, and how gratefully he would take her hand between his own thin wasted ones, in which you could see round every bone. Then she would shake his pillow, and arrange

his bed, and perhaps feed him with a few spoonful of wine or broth, and then sit down and talk in simple earnest words—which came straight from the heart and went as straight to it—of One who of old, while on earth, raised the dead, and who died Himself that He might give a better life to every one who dies believing on Him.

It was Mrs. Beardwood who wrote the letter which brought Sergeant Bennett's father and mother from their farm in Lancashire to Ballybrannigan that they might see their soldier-boy once more before he died. It was Mrs. Beardwood who took care that the room which had been assigned them in the married quarters was properly fitted-up and prepared for them. I may remark that the soldiers' wives came forward as one woman with such furniture as they could spare, while the purses of all the officers were open for anything extra which was wanted. It was Mrs. Beardwood who welcomed the sorrowing couple, and led them to the sick bed, and cheered and soothed them, and proved as great a comfort to parents as to son. It was Mrs. Beardwood who, perceiving, with a woman's tact, that all was not as it should be between the Reverend Michael O'Connor and the major, and fearing opposition, if her intention was known, went by herself to the rector's house, and got his promise to come and administer the holy communion to the dying man, she herself having first prepared the latter to receive it as a penitent disciple of Him who instituted the holy rite. It was Mrs. Beardwood who knelt down with the weeping father and mother, and her own son, whom she had prevailed upon to join the little congregation, while the clergyman fulfilled his promise; and it was she who supported the feeble head when it became necessary to raise it—yes, and stood nearest to it on a day which soon followed, when the route came, and the Captain called his soldier away. She had only come to Ballybrannigan for a three weeks' visit, and the one dread poor Bennett seemed to have wished, lest she should have gone before he died. "I can die better, ma'am, if you are near me," he said, in his low, faint voice, and near him, by God's mercy, she was, when he closed his eyes, and fell asleep, like a weary child. After he had looked "Good-bye!" he could not speak to father and mother, it was towards Mrs. Beardwood he turned his last, earnest, loving glance—a glance which said "God bless you!" as plainly as ever lips spoke the words; and then he never looked or moved again. We buried him with all the solemn pageantry of soldier's funeral, on a bright sunny afternoon, in Ballybrannigan churchyard. Behind the coffin, not ashamed to be seen as fellow-mourner with poor old Bennett and his wife, came Mrs. Beardwood, leaning on the arm of the major; and there was not an officer or man who

would not have given a year's pay to have been in his place, and had the honour of escorting the good, dear, brave old lady.

Besides the firing-party, and the men actually on duty in the funeral procession, everyone belonging to the depôt, who could possibly attend, was present. The churchyard was lined with spectators, military and civilian. And, if many a bronzed veteran was moved, as the coffin of his young comrade was lowered into the grave, I doubt whether they were not all more moved still at the sight of the true gentlewoman, who was not ashamed to obey an order from Head-quarters above, and "weep with them that weep." After the three volleys had been fired, and the funeral *cortège* was about to march back to barracks, she left the major's arm, and took hold of the hands of the bereaved parents, that they might feel they were not alone in their great sorrow. There were muttered exclamations of "God bless her!" through the ranks; and eyes, unused to tears were wet, my own among the number. I was not ashamed now to own to those tears. I was not ashamed of them then. They made me none the worse man, nor soldier either.

PORPHYROGENE •

Cecil is heir to a manor,
 Talks as if heir to a throne ;
 Can his love of the sunlight be greater
 Than mine who have little to own ?

He has costly dresses and foods,
 Beds of satin and down ;
 I dwell in a little chamber
 In a quiet part of the town—

In a chamber facing the east,
 With roses over its walls,
 Where motionless birds are singing
 To silent waterfalls.

He has beds of satin and down,
 But is his sleep more sweet
 Than mine, who lie with a quiet heart,
 White-quilted from head to feet ?

He walks within the shadow
 Of old ancestral trees ;
 And whether in city or meadow,
 Is haunted ever by those.

Heir of the sun and the breeze,
 I wander forth at will,
 Reading books in brooks,
 Hearing songs in the rill.

On the sparkling sands of the sea,
 Where blistered sea-weeds show,
 Over loose shingle and rocks,
 Worn with the ebb and the flow.

Pleasure upon my brow,
 Fragments of verse on my lips,
 I walk by the waves, and watch,
 The sails of passing ships.

We are but pilgrims here,
Treading on paths well trod,
Closer we move each year
To the judgment seat of God.

There is sorrow on angel brows,
When angels gaze from the skies
On acres purchased by fraud,
And lands acquired by lies.

Better a rood of land
By honest industry thine,
Than for half-a-thousand acres
To barter thy birthright divine.

I am heir of the sun and the breeze,
Heir of all gardens and downs,
Though I have not a finger's breadth
Of land in country or towns.

Heir of the sun and the breeze,
The wealth of earth is mine,
Lilies and lakes, the song of birds,
And sweet smiles wherein all things shine.

ROBERT F. HANNAY.



